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VISIT...

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TIME

THE LOST YEAR

HOW THE PANDEMIC
CHANGED A
GENERATION OF
STUDENTS

BY KATIE REILLY

PLUS

SOLVING THE
COLLEGE
DEBT CRISIS

BY ALANA SEMUELS

Twyla Joseph, 17,
a senior at
Central Islip High
School in New York



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restaurant open now



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MESSAGE



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Photograph by
Rebecca Kiger
for TIME

ON THE
COVER:
Photograph
by Mohamed
Sadek for
TIME



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Conversation



WHAT YOU SAID ABOUT ...

SILENT NO MORE Readers of the March 29/April 5 issue thanked TIME staff writer Cady Lang and senior editor Lucy Feldman for their reporting and personal insight into anti-Asian racism and rhetoric in the immediate aftermath of the Atlanta spa shootings. “During these already difficult times in America, it is important that we band together and support one another,” tweeted Delicia Pitt on the rise in anti-Asian discrimination and violence during the COVID-19 pandemic. “We must stop placing blame on others, and we must stop the hate.” Lenore Valenti of Staten Island, N.Y., agreed, writing of her concerns that America is “going backward, not progressing. Have we not learned from history?”

‘Asian Americans deserve to live without fear of going about their daily lives.’

RANDALL WOODFIN, mayor of Birmingham, Ala.

MANY READERS FELT Feldman had read their minds with her essay on struggling to be heard as an Asian-American woman in the workplace—and the world. Sally Oey of Ann Arbor, Mich., wrote that it’s “putting in words the heart of Asian America.” On Twitter, Florizel Yasuhara shared that the piece “speaks the words that I’m often too afraid to say out loud.” TIME’s cover for that issue, a portrait by the artist Amanda Phingbodhipakkiya, was also designed to be empowering. “May it offer you a moment of peace and

‘Exactly what I needed to read right now.’

COURTNEY KAN, on Twitter

pride,” Phingbodhipakkiya tweeted of her work, “and may her defiant spirit be a rallying cry for systemic change, accountability [and] more resources for our community.”



TIME for NFTs

TIME’s iconic “Is God Dead?” cover from 1966 spawned a follow-up a half-century later, asking “Is Truth Dead?” To accompany Andrew R. Chow’s feature on the rise of NFTs—digital tokens tied to assets that can be bought, sold and traded—in the March 29/April 5 issue, creative director D.W. Pine added a third: a “Is Fiat Dead?” cover, which exists only as a NFT. The special covers were auctioned on the digital marketplace SuperRare at superrare.co/time

BOOKMARK Celebrating “the richness, the diversity and the joy of stories by our community, for our community,” a group of TIME’s AAPI (Asian American and Pacific Islander) journalists have curated a reading list of their favorite books written by Asian authors. See their recommendations at time.com/reading-list



Subscribe to TIME’s free politics newsletter and get **exclusive news and insights from Washington**, sent straight to your inbox. For more, visit time.com/politicsemail

SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT In “Silent No More” (March 29/April 5), the name of one of the victims of the March 16 mass shooting in Atlanta was misspelled. It is Xiaojie Tan.

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HATE**

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'If folks don't want to visit a doughnut shop, they don't have to.'

MIKE TATTERSFIELD, Krispy Kreme CEO, in a March 27 interview responding to criticism of the fast-food chain's announcement that it would give one free doughnut per day to anyone showing proof of COVID-19 vaccination

'No one can take a drop from Egypt's water, and if it happens there will be inconceivable instability in the region.'

ABDUL FATTAH AL-SISI, President of Egypt, raising concerns on March 30 that a massive dam being built by Ethiopia on the Blue Nile could impact Egypt's water supply

47%

Percentage of Americans who report belonging to a church, synagogue or mosque, according to a new Gallup survey analysis released on March 29—the first time in eight decades that Gallup data has shown membership dropping below the majority

'WE ARE JUST ALMOST THERE, BUT NOT QUITE YET.'

ROCHELLE WALENSKY, CDC director, saying she has a sense of "impending doom" over a possible fourth COVID-19 wave in the U.S. and urging Americans to continue following public-health guidelines, at a White House press briefing on March 29

'I know we promised to die with the secret, but this will open doors for many other queer people to simply exist.'

LIL NAS X, in a March 26 open letter to his younger self promoting the release of his new single "Montero (Call Me by Your Name)"

'When I look at George Floyd, I look at my dad, I look at my brothers, I look at my cousins, my uncles... I look at how that could have been one of them.'

DARNELLA FRAZIER, the teen who filmed viral video of Floyd's death, testifying on March 30 at the trial of former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin, who is charged with murdering Floyd



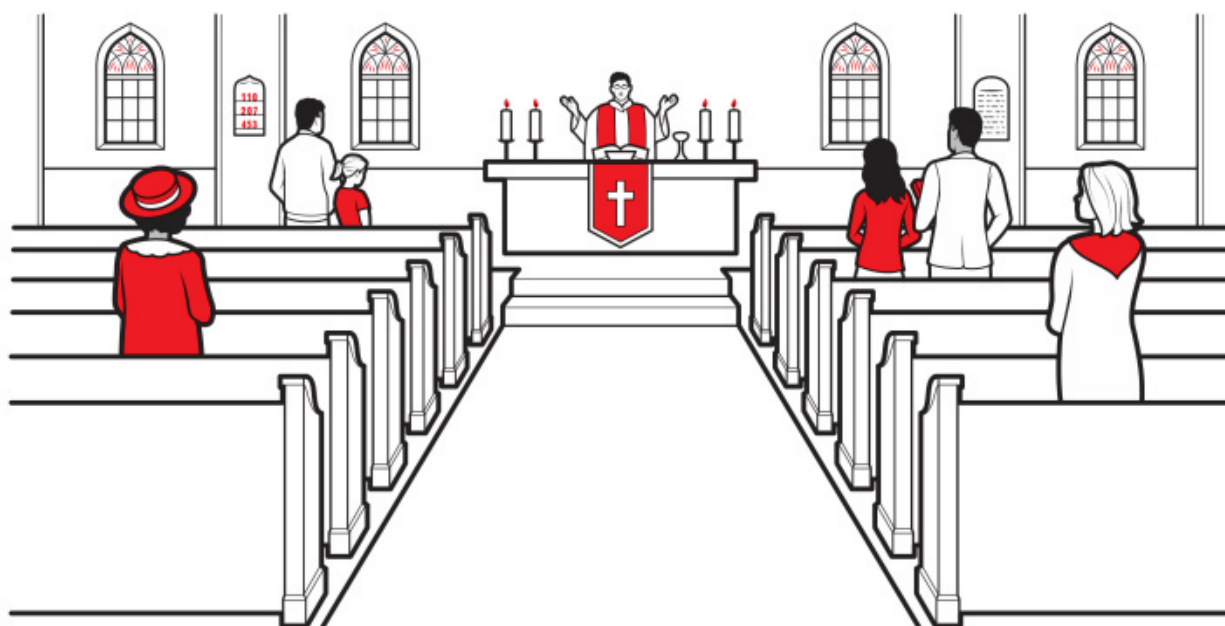
2.8

Weight, in tons, in award-winning artisanal cheese that a group of French monks are now attempting to sell online, after COVID-19 lockdowns meant fewer visitors to their monastery's shop



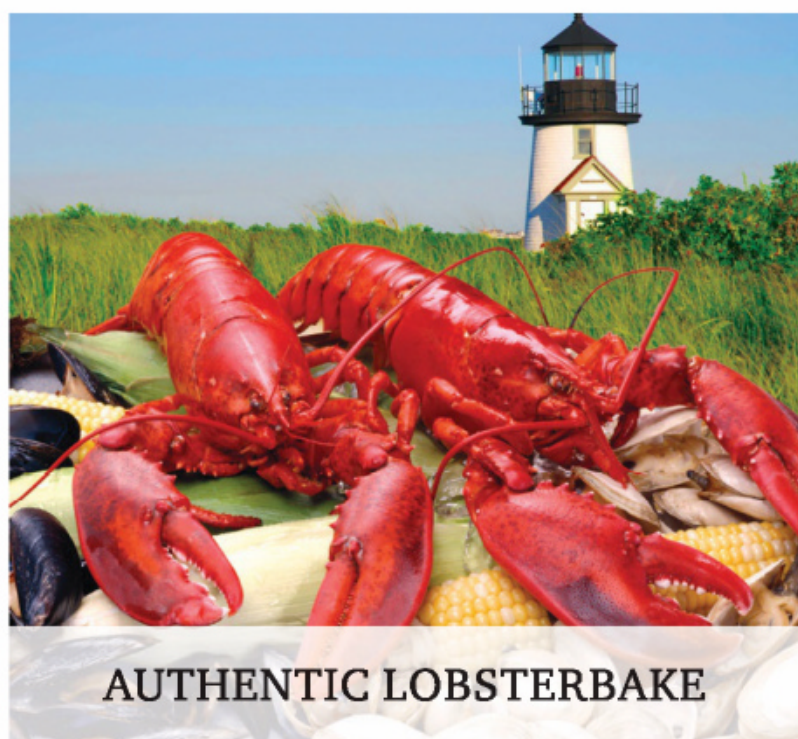
GOOD NEWS
of the week

The U.S. bald eagle population has grown fourfold in the past decade, according to a March 24 report from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service





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The Brief

BALLOT BATTLE
State representative
Park Cannon is
arrested protesting
Georgia's new election
law on March 25

INSIDE

STATE LEGISLATURES ACROSS
U.S. DEBATE ANTI-TRANS BILLS

RENOVATING RIO'S
CRISTO REDENTOR

ASIAN BUSINESSES IN ATLANTA
BRACE AFTER SHOOTINGS

PHOTOGRAPH BY ALYSSA POINTER

The Brief is reported by Jasmine Aguilera, Madeleine Carlisle, Alejandro de la Garza, Suyin Haynes, Sanya Mansoor, Ciara Nugent, Billy Perrigo, Madeline Roache and Olivia B. Waxman

POLITICS

After huge 2020 turnout, GOP moves to restrict voting

By Sanya Mansoor

MOMENTS AFTER GOVERNOR BRIAN KEMP signed a sweeping overhaul of Georgia's election law, state representative Park Cannon, a Democrat, knocked on the door of his office. Kemp was making an announcement inside, and law-enforcement officials told Cannon to stop. She continued, and was swiftly dragged down a corridor of the state capitol by two Georgia State Patrol officers. "All we asked is for her to be able to see [Kemp] sign a bill that is signing our rights away," state representative Erica Thomas, a Democrat who watched Cannon's arrest, said in a video posted on Instagram. "And you arrested her."

What Kemp was signing on March 25 was among the first in a spate of new restrictions on voting, igniting a political battle over the future of voting rights in the country. Republicans in Georgia say the new law is necessary to preserve "election integrity," restore public confidence in voting and root out fraud that election officials say exists almost entirely in the minds of losing candidates. (Georgia secretary of state Brad Raffensperger has repeatedly said there was no widespread fraud in the state's elections.)

The law strengthens voter-ID requirements for absentee ballots and imposes new limits on drop boxes, offering food or drink to voters in line, and more. Democrats and voting-rights advocates say this amounts to a thinly veiled attempt to suppress turnout after last year's elections, and will make it harder for Black and other minority voters—as well as poor and disabled Georgians—to cast ballots. They call it a blueprint for a broader strategy to roll back voting rights in GOP-controlled state legislatures across the country.

"It's sick and un-American what they're doing, and it cannot stand," President Joe Biden said of the Republican efforts to restrict voting in dozens of states. Describing the new Georgia law's likely disproportionate impact on minority voters as "Jim Crow in the 21st century," he said the Justice Department is "taking a look" at what the federal government can do to blunt the law, and urged Congress to pass a Democrat-sponsored voting-rights bill currently before the Senate. Democratic lawyer Marc Elias, the Georgia NAACP and voting-rights groups have already filed lawsuits challenging the law.

IT'S NOT A COINCIDENCE that Georgia is at the center of this fight. Voting-rights advocates in the state have worked for years to get out the vote among underrepresented

communities. Their campaign helped drive record turnout in recent elections. It also coincided with a major electoral defeat for Republicans: Biden flipped the state blue, for the first time in decades, and two Democratic newcomers unseated the state's incumbent GOP Senators in subsequent runoff elections.

But Georgia is not the only state where Republicans, in the wake of 2020's record turnout, are moving to restrict voting. As of Feb. 19, lawmakers were pushing 253 bills that could restrict voter access in 43 states, according to the Brennan Center for Justice, a nonprofit researching democracy. (There are also several hundred bills that seek to increase voting access,

and legislatures in New Jersey and Kentucky have recently passed measures expanding early voting.) Many of the restrictive proposals target early and mail voting in other battleground states, like Arizona, Florida and Texas.

Some of these efforts fall in line with broader conservative messaging. The Heritage Foundation recommends states improve "election integrity" by pushing policies to root out fraud, particularly through strict voter-ID requirements. The Republican State Leadership Committee—the GOP's election arm for state-legislature and secretary-of-state races—is coordinating what it calls a national effort to "make it easier to vote and harder to cheat."

DEMOCRATS IN STATE LEGISLATURES across the country are looking to Congress for ways to fight back. A comprehensive voting bill—including requirements for states to automatically register eligible voters, restore voting rights of formerly incarcerated citizens and allow no-excuse absentee balloting, among dozens of other measures—passed the House on March 3. But the bill is unlikely to pass the

divided Senate, where it would require 60 votes, without filibuster reform. And even then, it's not yet clear whether all 50 Democratic votes in the upper chamber are on board.

Carol Anderson, chair of African-American studies at Emory University in Atlanta and author of *One Person, No Vote*, says the U.S. has been here before. She compares the Georgia law and other proposed bills around the country to attempts in the late 19th century to disenfranchise Black voters that relied on "an array of policies that were designed and that worked together."

"If the poll tax didn't get you, the literacy test would," Anderson says. "If the literacy test didn't get you, then the good-character clause would. It's a web." — *With reporting by BRIAN BENNETT/WASHINGTON*

DOWN VOTING

FLORIDA

Republicans are considering banning ballot drop boxes and adding limits to vote-by-mail.

TEXAS

Republicans have put forth new proposals that would restrict the hours when counties could offer early voting.

ARIZONA

Republicans are pushing bills that would remove infrequent voters from an early-voting list and shorten the state's early-voting period.

NEWS TICKER

Mexico police under fire over custody death

Protests in Mexico and El Salvador have followed the March 27 death of Victoria Salazar in Tulum.

Authorities have confirmed Salazar, a Salvadoran woman, died of a broken neck while in police custody.

The Quintana Roo state prosecutor said his office is **preparing femicide charges** against four officers involved in her arrest.

GOP Rep. in sex-crime investigation

The Department of Justice is investigating whether Republican Florida Representative Matt Gaetz **violated federal sex-trafficking laws** over an alleged sexual relationship with a 17-year-old girl, the *New York Times* reported March 30.

Gaetz has strongly denied the charges.

Jailed Kremlin critic declares hunger strike

Imprisoned Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny said in a March 31 Instagram post published by his lawyers that he will **be on a hunger strike** until the prison where he's being held provides him with medical treatment. Navalny also alleged that he's been denied sufficient sleep.



TOUCH-UP Cristina Ventura, an architect heading up restoration and repair of Rio de Janeiro's *Cristo Redentor*, looks out from atop the 125-ft.-tall statue on March 24. The iconic Art Deco figure, completed in 1931, is undergoing the touch-ups in preparation for its 90th birthday this October. More than 40 people, including engineers, geologists and architects, are working on the monument situated on the peak of Brazil's Mount Corcovado, Reuters reports.

EQUALITY

Trans rights in the spotlight as U.S. states pass discriminatory bills

AS MARCH 31 MARKED THE ANNUAL Transgender Day of Visibility, LGBTQ advocates in the U.S. warned that a flurry of legislation targeting access to gender-affirming health care and sports participation for young transgender people will have significant and harmful effects. Over 100 bills attacking transgender people have been introduced in state legislatures since 2020, according to the ACLU, with over 60 currently in consideration across the country.

HEALTH CARE BANS On March 29, the Arkansas senate passed a bill that would ban access to gender-affirming health care for transgender youth. If signed into law by Republican Governor Asa Hutchinson, the state would be the first to ban such access. Chase Strangio, deputy director for transgender justice at the ACLU's LGBT & HIV Project, called it "the single most extreme anti-trans law to ever pass through a state legislature." Similar bills are advancing through state legislatures in Tennessee and Alabama—the latter of which would ban health care for transgender youth up to 19 years old and include felony penalties for medical practitioners.

ANTI-TRANS SPORTS BILLS "Simply a politically motivated bill for the sake of discrimination itself," said Alphonso David, president of the Human Rights Campaign, of another anti-trans bill Governor Hutchinson signed into law on March 25, banning transgender women and girls from participating in sports consistent with their gender identity in Arkansas. Governors in Mississippi and Tennessee have both signed similar bills into law in March, and South Dakota's Governor Kristi Noem issued executive orders to an equivalent effect on March 29.

EQUALITY ACT The spate of anti-trans bills comes amid broader national conversations on transgender equality. On Feb. 25, the Democratic-led House of Representatives passed the Equality Act, which extends civil rights protections on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity, but its fate in the Senate is far less certain. And while the Senate confirmed Dr. Rachel Levine as the first ever openly trans federal official on March 24, her confirmation hearings were peppered with transphobic comments and misinformation from Kentucky's Republican Senator Rand Paul. —SUYIN HAYNES

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Only your healthcare professional knows the specifics of your condition and how OPDIVO in combination with YERVOY may fit into your overall therapy. The information below does not take the place of talking with your healthcare professional, so talk to them if you have any questions.

What are OPDIVO and YERVOY?

OPDIVO and YERVOY are prescription medicines used to treat people with a type of advanced stage lung cancer called non-small cell lung cancer (NSCLC). OPDIVO may be used in combination with YERVOY as your first treatment for NSCLC when your lung cancer has spread to other parts of your body (metastatic) **and** your tumors are positive for PD-L1, but do not have an abnormal EGFR or ALK gene.

It is not known if OPDIVO and YERVOY are safe and effective when used in children younger than 18 years of age.

What is the most important information I should know about OPDIVO and YERVOY?

OPDIVO and YERVOY are medicines that may treat certain cancers by working with your immune system. OPDIVO and YERVOY can cause your immune system to attack normal organs and tissues in any area of your body and can affect the way they work. These problems can sometimes become serious or life-threatening and can lead to death and may happen anytime during treatment or even after your treatment has ended. You may have more than one of these problems at the same time. Some of these problems may happen more often when OPDIVO is used in combination with YERVOY.

Call or see your healthcare provider right away if you develop any new or worse signs or symptoms, including

- **Lung problems:** new or worsening cough; shortness of breath; chest pain
- **Intestinal problems:** diarrhea (loose stools) or more frequent bowel movements than usual; stools that are black, tarry, sticky, or have blood or mucus; severe stomach-area (abdominal) pain or tenderness
- **Liver problems:** yellowing of your skin or the whites of your eyes; severe nausea or vomiting; pain on the right side of your stomach area (abdomen); dark urine (tea colored); bleeding or bruising more easily than normal

- **Hormone gland problems:** headaches that will not go away or unusual headaches; eye sensitivity to light; eye problems; rapid heartbeat; increased sweating; extreme tiredness; weight gain or weight loss; feeling more hungry or thirsty than usual; urinating more often than usual; hair loss; feeling cold; constipation; your voice gets deeper; dizziness or fainting; changes in mood or behavior, such as decreased sex drive, irritability, or forgetfulness
- **Kidney problems:** decrease in the amount of urine; blood in your urine; swelling in your ankles; loss of appetite
- **Skin problems:** rash; itching; skin blistering or peeling; painful sores or ulcers in mouth or nose, throat, or genital area
- **Eye problems:** blurry vision, double vision, or other vision problems; eye pain or redness

Problems can also happen in other organs and tissues. These are not all of the signs and symptoms of immune system problems that can happen with OPDIVO and YERVOY. Call or see your healthcare provider right away for any new or worsening signs or symptoms, which may include:

- Chest pain; irregular heartbeat; shortness of breath; swelling of ankles
- Confusion; sleepiness; memory problems; changes in mood or behavior; stiff neck; balance problems; tingling or numbness of the arms or legs
- Double vision; blurry vision; sensitivity to light; eye pain; changes in eye sight
- Persistent or severe muscle pain or weakness; muscle cramps
- Low red blood cells; bruising

Getting medical help right away may help keep these problems from becoming more serious.

Your healthcare team will check you for these problems during treatment and may treat you with corticosteroid or hormone replacement medicines. Your healthcare team may also need to delay or completely stop your treatment if you have severe side effects.

What should I tell my healthcare provider before receiving OPDIVO and YERVOY? Before you receive OPDIVO and YERVOY, tell your healthcare provider about all of your medical conditions, including if you:

- have immune system problems such as Crohn's disease, ulcerative colitis, or lupus
- have received an organ transplant



Talk to your doctor about OPDIVO + YERVOY

www.OPDIVOYERVOY.com 1-855-OPDIVOYERVOY

- have received or plan to receive a stem cell transplant that uses donor stem cells (allogeneic)
- have received radiation treatment to your chest area in the past and have received other medicines that are like OPDIVO
- have a condition that affects your nervous system, such as myasthenia gravis or Guillain-Barré syndrome
- are pregnant or plan to become pregnant. OPDIVO and YERVOY can harm your unborn baby
- are breastfeeding or plan to breastfeed. It is not known if OPDIVO or YERVOY passes into your breast milk. Do not breastfeed during treatment with OPDIVO or YERVOY and for 5 months after the last dose of OPDIVO or YERVOY

Females who are able to become pregnant: Your healthcare provider should do a pregnancy test before you start receiving OPDIVO or YERVOY.

- You should use an effective method of birth control during your treatment and for at least 5 months after your last dose of OPDIVO or YERVOY. Talk to your healthcare provider about birth control methods that you can use during this time.
- Tell your healthcare provider right away if you become pregnant or think you are pregnant during treatment with OPDIVO or YERVOY. You or your healthcare provider should contact Bristol Myers Squibb at 1-844-593-7869 as soon as you become aware of the pregnancy.

Tell your healthcare provider about all the medicines you take, including prescription and over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements.

Know the medicines you take. Keep a list of them to show your healthcare providers and pharmacist when you get a new medicine.

What are the possible side effects of OPDIVO and YERVOY?

OPDIVO and YERVOY can cause serious side effects, including:

- **See “What is the most important information I should know about OPDIVO + YERVOY?”**
- **Severe infusion reactions.** Tell your healthcare team or nurse right away if you get these symptoms during an infusion of OPDIVO or YERVOY: chills or shaking; itching or rash; flushing; shortness of breath or wheezing; dizziness; feel like passing out; fever; back or neck pain

- **Complications, including graft-versus-host disease (GVHD), of bone marrow (stem cell) transplant that uses donor stem cells (allogeneic).** These complications can be severe and can lead to death. These complications may happen if you underwent transplantation either before or after being treated with OPDIVO or YERVOY. Your healthcare provider will monitor you for these complications.

The most common side effects of OPDIVO when used in combination with YERVOY include: feeling tired; diarrhea; rash; itching; nausea; pain in muscles, bones, and joints; fever; cough; decreased appetite; vomiting; stomach-area (abdominal) pain; shortness of breath; upper respiratory tract infection; headache; low thyroid hormone levels (hypothyroidism); decreased weight; and dizziness.

These are not all the possible side effects of OPDIVO and YERVOY. Call your doctor for medical advice about side effects.

You are encouraged to report side effects of prescription drugs to the FDA. Call 1-800-FDA-1088.

OPDIVO (10 mg/mL) and YERVOY (5 mg/mL) are injections for intravenous (IV) use.

This is a brief summary of the most important information about OPDIVO and YERVOY. For more information, talk with your healthcare providers, call 1-855-673-4861, or go to www.OPDIVO.com.



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NEWS TICKER

Thousands flee Myanmar airstrikes

Myanmar's military junta **announced a monthlong cease-fire** on March 31—excepting incidents that could impact its government—after days of airstrikes forced thousands to flee into neighboring Thailand. Protests continue against the Feb. 1 coup; security forces have killed over 500 people.

WHO report posits source of COVID-19

The World Health Organization (WHO) released a report on March 30 suggesting **animal to human transmission**, perhaps at wildlife farms, as the likely source of early COVID-19 cases near Wuhan, China—but said more research is needed. It also said the possibility the virus emerged from a laboratory leak was “extremely unlikely.”

Eurovision Song Contest bans Belarus

Belarus was **disqualified from the 2021 Eurovision Song Contest** on March 26 over a rules “breach,” after lyrics in two songs submitted by the would-be performers—such as “I will teach you to toe the line”—were seen as critical of antigovernment protesters.

GOOD QUESTION

Will Amazon workers ignite a labor-union revolution?

IN THE SLEEPY SOUTHERN TOWN OF BESSEMER, ALA., A brigade of Amazon warehouse workers has challenged one of the largest retail organizations in the world to a unionization battle.

If a simple majority of the roughly 6,000 workers have voted for the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union (RWDSU) to represent them by the March 29 deadline, they will be the first group of Amazon employees to form a union in the U.S., after several failed attempts at other plants. While the RWDSU faced an uphill battle—before voting started, Amazon organized mandatory antiunion meetings at the warehouse—a vote for unionization could spur more workers at the company and beyond to seek bargaining power, marking an increase in private-sector union membership that has been in decline for decades. If the vote fails, it could stifle future attempts to unionize.

Unlike in many labor battles, the central issue isn't just money. At Amazon's warehouses, workers make at least \$15 per hour plus benefits. That rate is more than twice the federal minimum wage, while in Bessemer the median annual income is about \$18,000. Instead the fight is about control, and demands on worker efficiency.

Some employees believe they don't need representation. J.C. Thompson, a supervisor, says Amazon warehouse workers are paid and treated fairly for their work.

But other workers say they need a union on their side. They want wages commensurate with Amazon's profits, safety on the job during a pandemic that has infected thousands of Amazon workers nationwide, and to be treated like human beings. Darryl Richardson, 51, a warehouse worker leading the charge, says he was drawn to unionizing after being approached by a supervisor for spending too much time in the restroom. “I feel like we're a number. We're robots,” he says.

(A union could help workers bargain for more breaks and clearer policies.)

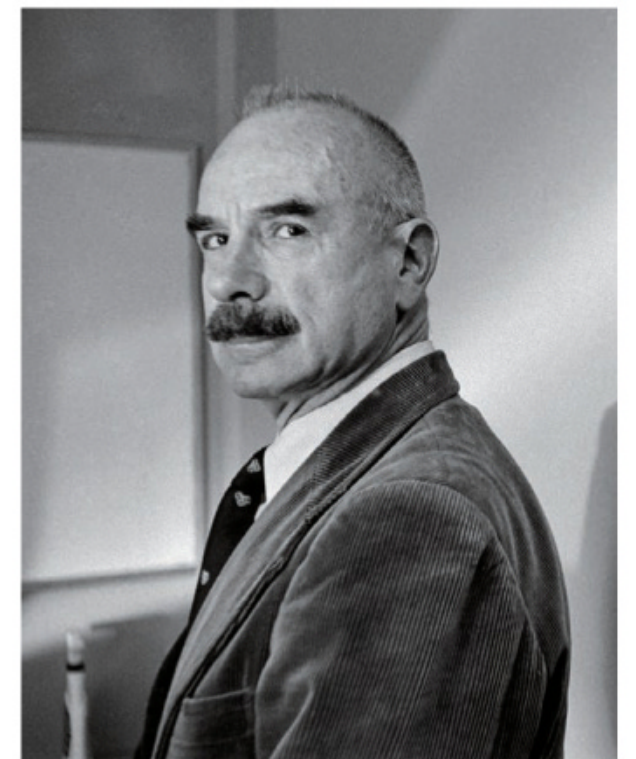
Amazon says it has every right to monitor employee productivity. “We have performance expectations for every Amazonian—be it corporate employees or fulfillment-center associates—and we measure actual performance against those expectations,” says spokesperson Heather Knox. The company declined to comment on the record on Richardson's allegation.

But labor advocates hope the Bessemer plant's fight could spark a resurgence in private-sector labor unions, especially with a prounion President and a Democratic-led Congress. Public support is also growing: according to a September 2020 Gallup report, 65% of Americans approved of labor unions, the highest number in nearly two decades. “There's a chance for this to be a big moment for the future of labor unions,” says David Madland of the Center for American Progress. “This could be the start of a big growth spurt.” —ABBY VESOULIS

DIED

G. Gordon Liddy *Watergate planner*

ONE COULD ARGUE THAT G. Gordon Liddy, who died March 30 at 90, was always ruthless. According to an oft-repeated anecdote from his childhood, he once ate a rat dragged in by his sister's cat “to demonstrate to myself my lack of fear.” Thirty years later, while serving in Richard Nixon's Administration, the lawyer was a member of the White House “Plumbers,” a secret unit tasked with doing whatever it took to stop leaks—a job that led to a role in the Watergate burglary that eventually brought about Nixon's 1974 resignation.



Liddy's refusal to testify led to his serving the longest prison term of any of the scandal's personae. But after getting out, he had no problem talking, moving into a lucrative speaking career. “Perhaps more than any of the Watergate characters,” TIME observed of the unrepentant tone of his best-selling 1980 memoir, “Liddy embodied the principles underlying the scandal that destroyed a President.” He did what had to be done, he seemed to suggest, and there was to him, despite everything, no shame in that. —OLIVIA B. WAXMAN

LIDDY: PAUL HOSERFOS—THE NEW YORK TIMES/REDUX; WALTER: AF ARCHIVE/ALAMY; CLEARLY: COURTESY HARPERCOLLINS CHILDREN'S BOOKS/ALAN MCEWAN/REUTERS



DIED

Jessica Walter

Arresting actor

By Alia Shawkat

JESSICA WALTER WOULD LOVE TO KNOW THAT SHE REMAINED a meme sensation even after she passed—it goes to show what a powerhouse she really was, that she could connect to younger generations late in her career. An award-winning actor who starred in Clint Eastwood’s directorial debut, *Play Misty for Me*, and voiced spy chief Malory Archer in the cult-classic animated sitcom *Archer*, among other roles, Walter, who died on March 24 at 80, was perhaps most beloved for her role as perennially tipsy matriarch Lucille Bluth in *Arrested Development*.

The writing on *Arrested Development* was top-notch, but her delivery was incredible. Jessica was an actor’s actor—and the core of the show. As with any dysfunctional family, after all, the behavior patterns usually stem from the mother.

I started filming *Arrested Development* when I was 14; when I returned for later seasons, I always wanted to prove I was an adult. Even though I’d done lots of indie movies and was working on my own show, *Search Party*, I still felt slightly intimidated. But Jessica was like that grandma who’s always hyping you up. “You all know what Alia has been up to, right?” she’d say in the hair and makeup trailer, and loudly. “She’s starring in her own show, she’s brilliant.”

I hope I get to work on a project so groundbreaking later in life, let alone become its strongest selling point. If I could really give it my all at that stage in the game, then I would know that I’m doing it right. —As told to SANYA MANSOOR; Shawkat is an actor and Walter’s former *Arrested Development* co-star

DIED

Famed Egyptian feminist author and women’s-rights activist **Nawal El Saadawi** at 89 on March 21.

> Pulitzer Prize– and Oscar-winning author and screenwriter **Larry McMurtry** at 84 on March 25.

> **Sarah Obama**, stepgrandmother of former President Barack Obama, at 99 on March 29.

PEAKED

Japan’s cherry-blossom season in Kyoto on March 26—the earliest date in the 1,200 years the season has been recorded, according to Osaka University.

SUED

Former President Trump by two Capitol Police officers on duty during the Jan. 6 Capitol riot. The officers argue Trump is responsible for physical and emotional damages.

FINED

French pharmaceutical giant Servier, a total of €2.7 million, after being found guilty of **covering up potentially fatal side effects** of a popular weight-loss drug.

FROZEN

The Facebook page of Venezuelan President **Nicolás Maduro**, for 30 days, after he asserted without evidence that an herbal remedy can cure COVID-19.

UPDATED

An overhaul of **Monopoly’s Community Chest cards**, to better reflect what *community* means to people today, toy company Hasbro announced March 18.

DIED

Beverly Cleary

A voice for kids

By Jenny Han

ONE BEVERLY CLEARY SCENE I’ll never forget comes in her book *Ramona and Her Mother*, from her beloved *Ramona* series: Ramona’s parents get into a huge fight after one of them forgets to turn on the Crock-Pot. Ramona’s tummy hurts as she watches them argue, and she worries they will divorce. That night she sleeps in her big sister Beezus’ bed, and they comfort each other. When I read that as a child, it brought me great comfort too. Other kids’ parents fight, and it turns out all right.

A Newbery Medal–winning author of over 40 books, Cleary, who died on March 25 at the age of 104, wrote about children’s fears in a way that honored them in the moment—but she also let you know that they would pass. In the morning, things would look different. She captured children’s inner worlds, crafting extraordinary narratives out of ordinary lives.

Cleary’s very name now conjures up a specific kind of magic for readers of all ages; it presses on that soft spot, not only of books you read and loved as a kid, but an ache for childhood itself.

Han is the best-selling author of the To All the Boys I’ve Loved Before and The Summer I Turned Pretty trilogies



A breaking point for Atlanta's Asian businesses

By Sanya Mansoor
and Andrew R. Chow

THIP ATHAKHANH SAYS HER APPROACH to facing racism used to be to “shrug it off, be silent and continue to move forward.” A chef who owns the Lao restaurant Snackboxe Bistro in Doraville, Ga., just outside Atlanta, Athakhanh typically took the name calling and condescension she would occasionally receive in stride, and avoided publicly voicing her opinion on issues related to anti-Asian hate out of fear of retaliation that could harm her business or employees’ livelihoods.

But the March 16 spa shootings—in which a gunman attacked three Atlanta-area businesses, killing eight people, six of them Asian women—transformed her perspective. “It was an agonizing feeling,” Athakhanh says. “Those [victims] could have been my mother, my sister, my friend.”

Following the shootings, Athakhanh took actions both personal and communal: she brought a gun to her restaurant for the first time in years and bought mace for female employees. She also provided refreshments at a March 20 solidarity rally in Atlanta and helped organize a fundraising initiative with other Asian women-owned businesses, selling meal boxes with 100% of proceeds going to victims’ families.

ACROSS THE METRO ATLANTA AREA, many other Asian-American business owners are now grappling with how to move forward. The past year has seen both a sharp decline in their businesses, driven by the COVID-19 pandemic, and a steep rise in violence against Asian Americans—one of the fastest-growing populations in the region. The number of Asian Americans in suburban Gwinnett County more than doubled between 2000 and 2020, per the New York Times. The population across greater Atlanta is diverse ethnically—with Indian, Vietnamese, Chinese and Korean communities—as well as economically: many residents run or work at family-run establishments like restaurants,



▲
Thip Athakhanh in her Doraville, Ga., restaurant on March 22

nail salons, spas and greengrocers.

Asian Americans meeting the public in such service-industry jobs are extra vulnerable to racist mistreatment. Business owners say these dynamics have worsened during the pandemic, as xenophobic language that emphasizes the coronavirus’s origins has been spread by those in positions of power, including former President Trump, who repeatedly called the coronavirus “the Chinese virus” or “kung flu.” Ching Hsia, whose family has owned the Chinese restaurant Yen Jing in Doraville for three decades, says they’ve received phone calls over the past year asking if they serve bat soup or had the virus. One person asked while in the restaurant: “Why do we have to wear a mask when you guys brought it over?”

Mylinh Cao, who owns Dua Vietnamese Noodle Soup close to the city center, says that name calling and suspicious looks have been part of her life since she arrived in the U.S. as a 17-month-old refugee of the Vietnam War, including at her

restaurant. In one incident, she says two customers became incensed when she refused them a refund on their mostly eaten meals. “There was a lot of name calling, calling me an ‘Asian bitch,’” she says, “saying, ‘Go back where you came from.’” Other patrons did nothing to intervene, Cao adds.

For many Asian Americans, the shootings were a tipping point causing them to think differently about racism, and responding to it. “We tend to not speak of what we are going through: maybe it’s just within our culture,” Tranga, a co-owner of Nails Couture in Griffin, Ga., says. “We should stand up and speak.”

Athakhanh recalls an encounter she had in Alabama as a child, when a man shouted a racial slur at her and her father. “My father said, ‘Thank you.’ He’s a very smart man, I know he knows what those words meant—but he chose to ignore it, mind his business and keep going,” she says. “That was the mentality I had growing up. But I

think times have changed for us. I think we reached our breaking point.” —*With reporting by ERICA LEE, ANNE MOST and FRANCESCA TRIANNI/NEW YORK* □

‘Times have changed for us. I think we reached our breaking point.’

THIP ATHAKHANH,
owner of
Snackboxe Bistro in
Doraville, Ga.

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The Brief

HEALTH

The psychology of influence

By Jeffrey Kluger

ONE OF EVOLUTION'S CLEVEREST tricks was giving us a sense of shame. It's a miserable feeling—low, humbling, publicly discomfiting—but it's supposed to be: if you do something lousy you ought to feel something lousy, so you don't do it again.

In theory, when so many of the strategies for beating the COVID-19 pandemic depend on abiding by social distancing and other rules, shaming people who don't ought to be a powerful way to bring us back in line. But increasingly, experts believe, the opposite is true. "The thinking has been that the more you shame people the more they will obey," says Giovanni Travaglino, an assistant professor of social psychology at Kent University. "But this turns out to be absolutely wrong."

Last month, Travaglino and Chanki Moon, an assistant professor of psychology at Leeds Beckett University, published a paper in *Frontiers in Psychology* that threw the ineffectiveness of shaming into relief. They assembled nearly 1,900 people from the U.S., Italy and South Korea—choosing those countries on the basis of their differing sense of the collective culture, with the U.S. judged the most individualistic, South Korea the most group-oriented and Italy in between. The subjects were asked to rate how ashamed or guilty they'd feel if they contracted COVID-19. They were also asked to rate how often they obey guidelines like social distancing and how likely they'd be to tell friends, acquaintances and health authorities if they tested positive. In all three countries, the higher the level of shame and guilt people felt over falling ill, the less likely they were to play it safe and to report their COVID-19 status.

In the U.S. and elsewhere, the anti-vaccine movement has long been a threat to public health, and many pro-vaccine messages have been designed to shame adherents. A December story in the U.K.'s *Metro* featured the headline "People think anti-vaxxers are 'stu-



TIME-Harris Poll Percentage of Americans vaccinated against COVID-19 who say they were influenced to get their shot by ...

63%

Reading or hearing a **news story about the results** of those already vaccinated

60%

Wanting to visit family or friends but not being able to without a vaccine

59%

Having a conversation with friends or family about whether to get a vaccine

52%

Wanting to travel but not being able to without a vaccine

44%

Seeing a celebrity or elected official get a vaccine

43%

Wanting to return to work or school but not being able to without a vaccine

32%

Being directly contacted by a local official with information on how to get vaccinated

SOURCE: HARRIS POLL SURVEY FIELDED AMONG A NATIONALLY REPRESENTATIVE SAMPLE OF 1,038 U.S. ADULTS ON MARCH 3. RESULTS REFLECT 273 RESPONDENTS WHO HAD ALREADY BEEN VACCINATED.

pid and selfish.’” Attention-grabbing, maybe, but counterproductive. “It’s hard to get people to act in a cooperative manner when you approach them that way,” says Travaglini. “It’s associated with subordination to authority, and people don’t like that.”

A new TIME-Harris Poll survey similarly suggests individual authority figures aren’t very effective at convincing vaccine skeptics. Of U.S. adults who had recently been vaccinated, only 32% said they were influenced by a local official reaching out directly via email, phone or mail. Much more effective, it seems, are appeals to people’s individual needs and desires.

Some 52% of those polled said they got the vaccine because they wanted to travel, for example. The people around us also play a major role, with 56% of respondents saying they got vaccinated after a friend or family member did, and 59% saying they were influenced merely by having a conversation with such a closely connected person. And despite our ostensible mistrust in the media, 63% said they were influenced by news reports about people who had already been vaccinated.

INDEED, PAST RESEARCH shows value in appealing to us through personal stories. In a 2015 study published in the *PNAS*, volunteers took a survey on their attitudes about vaccines and were then divided into three groups, each given one of three things to read: material showing that autism and vaccines are not related; a paragraph of a mother describing her child’s bout with measles; and material on an unrelated science topic. When the subjects took the vaccine survey again, all were more pro-vaccine than before, but the ones who read the mother’s account were dramatically more so, with an increase five times as great as that of the group that had read the material on autism and six times that of the control group.

Personal accounts can have a negative impact too. A new study published in *PLOS ONE*, by researchers from the University of Illinois and the Annenberg Public Policy Center, found that subjects who saw a video clip of Dr. Anthony Fauci talking about the safety and effectiveness of the measles vaccine came away from it more favorably disposed to vaccination overall. But the positive effect was diminished when they saw another video clip first, of a mother describing the severe rash one of her children developed after receiving the vaccine. The solution, the paper concluded, is not for the media to censor such accounts but to precede them with real-world data on the minimal risks and the considerable benefits of vaccines.

What doesn’t work, clearly, is pointing fingers and casting blame and shame. It’s the virus that’s the enemy, after all, not the people it infects. □

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Representative **Pramila Jayapal** is pushing Joe Biden to be more progressive

By **Abigail Abrams**

REPRESENTATIVE PRAMILA JAYAPAL LOOKS solemn. She is one of the top leaders of the progressive movement in Congress, and she's poised to finally effect change in a Democrat-controlled government after a decade of the party's sharing power with Republicans. But right now, she is in no mood to celebrate.

After the passage of the \$1.9 trillion COVID-19 relief package in mid-March, Jayapal was preparing to reintroduce her Medicare for All Act when, the afternoon before her announcement, a shooter killed eight people, including six women of Asian descent, near Atlanta and reignited a national conversation about racism, sexism and violence against Asian Americans. When we spoke by Zoom on March 19, Jayapal had just come from a moment of silence on the House floor for the victims. "It's been very tough," she says, settling into a chair in her office with a sigh. "And also not surprising."

The situation is, in some ways, devastatingly familiar to the Congresswoman. Jayapal, 55, who was born in India and came to the U.S. to attend college at Georgetown, got her start in politics as an activist in Seattle advocating for immigrants who experienced discrimination after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. She built the largest immigrant-rights organization in Washington State, formed diverse coalitions, and sued George W. Bush's Administration over its deportation of Somali immigrants.

She has said that experience taught her that even tragedies can be opportunities for change. But after years of agitating from the outside, Jayapal is a bona fide insider. After two years in the Washington State senate, she was elected to Congress in 2016, and she spent her first years fighting President Donald Trump at every turn. Now, as the chair of the Congressional Progressive Caucus, she is one of the most influential officials of the Democrats' left flank, and she has become a primary conduit between President Joe Biden and those in his party who think he's an overly cautious centrist. Her journey from activist to powerful legislator was aided by an approach that melds progressive beliefs with pragmatic style—a combination that has won her respect from both Democratic camps.

But legislating in a government under unified Democratic control is a more nuanced project than pushing for ambitious proposals from the outside, or even from the minority party. Jayapal's continued influence in D.C. depends on her ability to convince her caucus that compromise and incremental gains

can sometimes be the best way forward—and on her success at making that true. "Governing is different than opposing," she says, "and I think we are all getting used to the idea that we are governing."

THE CENTRAL QUESTION for Jayapal and the left is how far Biden is willing to go. Biden doesn't support Medicare for All—which is one of Jayapal's signature policies—and he's more moderate on most economic issues than Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders, whom Jayapal endorsed in the presidential primary. Nor does Biden so far support eliminating the filibuster, the Senate rule that effectively requires 60 votes to pass most legislation, which Jayapal and other progressives want to scrap.

But Jayapal says she has never been interested in replicating the antagonistic relationship between the right-wing House Freedom Caucus and Republican leadership that divided the GOP starting in 2015. Instead of acting as an "opposition" arm, she says she wants to be a "proposition" one: proposing the most progressive ideas possible and framing them in ways that can persuade her colleagues—and the President—to support them.

She says that model worked for Biden's COVID-19 relief legislation. The American Rescue Plan looked a lot like what progressive members wanted, and Biden got there in part because of the careful negotiating by people like Jayapal.

Throughout the process, Jayapal kept in close contact with House and Senate leadership, and her team spoke to the White House legislative-affairs staff almost daily, she says. When a \$15 minimum-wage increase fell out of the package because of Senate rules, some Democrats considered withholding their votes entirely. Jayapal helped persuade those members to support the deal, and it passed almost entirely along party lines. "Progressives have been sort of pushed to the margins so often in politics that I think we may have gotten used to that," Jayapal says. "And so people are very inclined to say, 'Oh, this happened again—we didn't get everything we wanted.'" But she taught her colleagues to realize, "We should take the win."

It's the strategy Jayapal plans to pursue on other policies—while still trying to bring Biden further left behind the scenes. Biden called Jayapal after the relief package passed to thank her for her help, she says, and while she thanked him for his leadership on the law in return, she also told him she still wants to see the minimum wage increased.

AS DEMOCRATS BEGIN to craft major infrastructure legislation, Jayapal plans to advocate for policies that will invest in America's poorest communities. The rescue package was "taking on decades of neoliberal thinking," she says, and she hopes it will show Americans the federal government should

JAYAPAL QUICK FACTS

Activist roots

Jayapal has been arrested three times for civil disobedience—including once for protesting Trump's immigration policies after she was elected to Congress.

Fighting for equality

She co-chairs the House's Transgender Equality Task Force, work partly inspired by her trans child Janak.

Deep bonds

The Jan. 6 riot bonded Jayapal and her colleagues. "To do this work, you have to be sustained," she says.



provide more equal opportunities for all.

Biden unveiled his infrastructure proposal on March 31, and before that, Jayapal and a small group of other progressive lawmakers met with the White House twice to talk strategy, she says. She wants the next bills to combat climate change, invest in childcare and paid-leave policies and take aim at prescription-drug costs. But the plan is already more contentious than COVID-19 relief, and to be effective, Jayapal says progressives will need to focus on a limited number of what she calls “popular and populist” priorities.

Health care is an important area to Jayapal. She co-chaired the health care unity task force that Biden and Sanders established last summer, and she wants Biden to adopt the proposals they agreed to, including lowering the Medicare eligibility age and adding aggressive drug-pricing powers. “I have raised it now to everyone that I’ve had the opportunity to speak with,” she says, chuckling.

But Jayapal has learned she can’t always hold out for the purest solution the way she would have in

‘Governing is different than opposing ... We are all getting used to the idea that we are governing.’

REPRESENTATIVE
PRAMILA JAYAPAL

her activist days. She knows Medicare for All isn’t close to passing Congress. So she’s focused on getting what she calls “foundational elements,” such as creating long-term-care jobs and expanding Medicare eligibility, into other bills while holding hearings on the larger plan. “I’m an immigrant woman, and I’ve spent my life working on civil rights,” she says, “so I feel a responsibility to do whatever I can to get people health care quickly.”

She knows none of her goals is going to be easy to accomplish, and time is short, with Republicans gunning to take back the House in 2022. But she is energized, and during difficult days she draws on the lessons from those early years of her career defending immigrant rights. As she pushes Biden to accept the left’s agenda piece by piece, she wants progressives to “never, ever let that undermine our ability to create the tipping point at which real change becomes possible,” she says. “That’s an organizer’s mentality: you never give up an opportunity to really build the movement so that when that tipping point comes, you’re ready.” □



LightBox

Far from home

Two 7-year-old migrant children, who arrived at the U.S.-Mexico border without their parents, wait at a makeshift processing site in Roma, Texas, on March 27. They are among the thousands of unaccompanied minors who have presented themselves to officials at the border since January in the hope of joining relatives or loved ones in the U.S. While efforts are under way to shelter and unite the children with sponsors as quickly as possible, the rate at which they are arriving has become a logistical, ethical and political challenge for the Biden Administration.

Photograph by Ed Jones—AFP/Getty Images

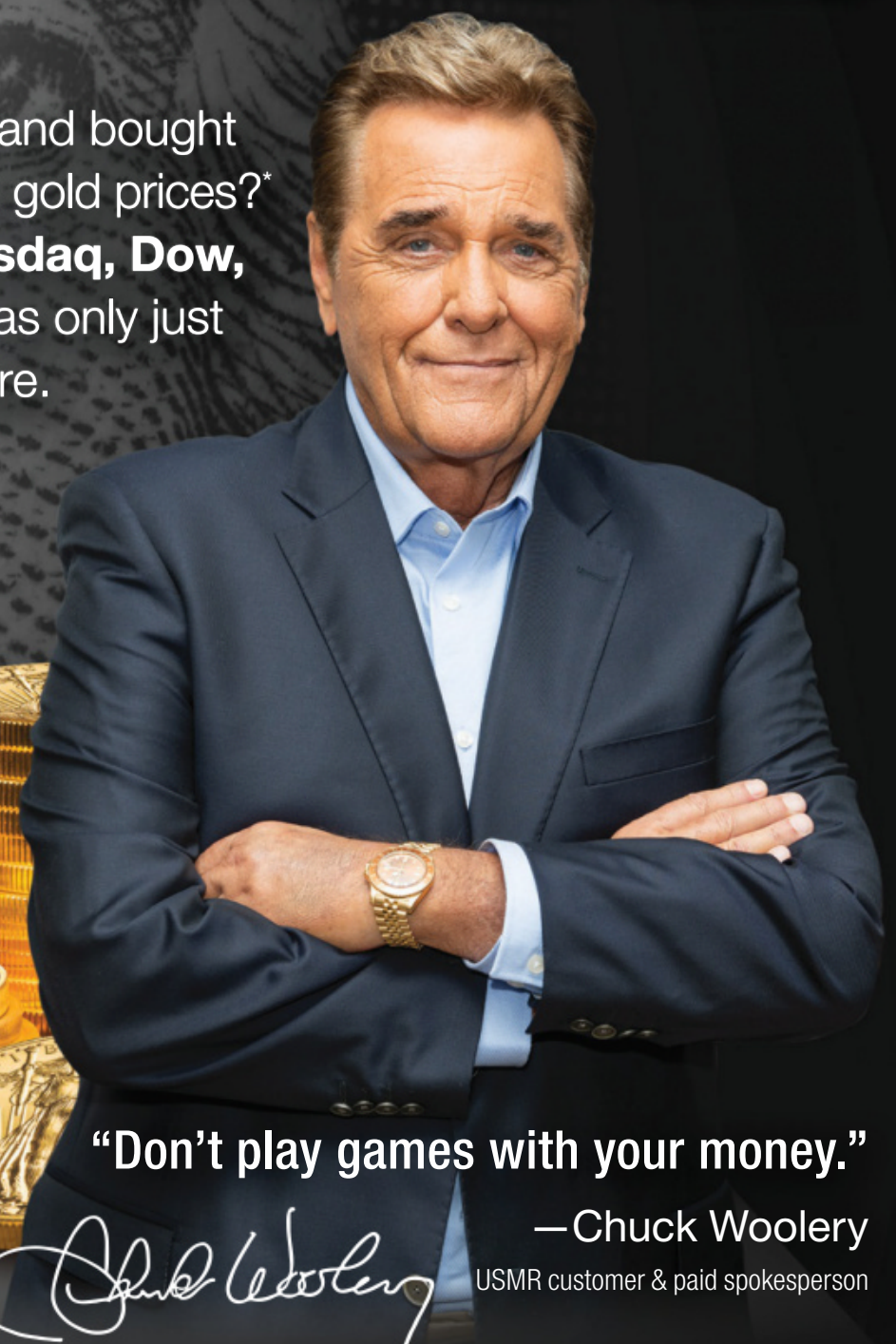
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TheView

NATION

AMERICA'S GUNS PANDEMIC

By Megan L. Ranney

COVID-19 has taught us many deadly lessons, among them how dangerous it is to approach a health problem as a political problem. We have lost lives, jobs and an imagined future because scoring political points became more important than following the science. For decades, we have made the same error about firearm injuries. ▶

INSIDE

WESTERN COMPANIES FACE
BOYCOTTS IN CHINA

THE GLOBE'S RISKIEST CHOKE
POINTS FOR SHIPPING

HOW WOULD MY WHITE FAMILY
VIEW ANTI-ASIAN RACISM?

TheView Opener

We have approached gun deaths as an issue of politics instead of seeing it as a public-health problem. As a result, we have not just failed to contain gun injuries and deaths, we have seen them increase substantially in number and horror.

For most Americans, “gun violence” surfaces only when there is a mass shooting, as was tragically the case in Atlanta and Boulder, Colo. The fact is, gun-related injuries are far more common than we think. From 2014 to 2017, death rates from gunshot wounds in the U.S. increased by approximately 20%. In 2020, preliminary reports suggest that the overall rate of gun homicide and suicide increased by 10% overall. More than 100 people died, and more than 200 were injured, because of firearms every single day of 2020. Most of these deaths, as in every other year, were gun suicides.

Each firearm-related injury and death leaves a trail of destruction, posttraumatic stress, future injury and lost wages. We must meet this challenge by approaching firearm injury as a public-health epidemic rather than a subject for debate on gun rights or control.

This is what we’ve done for COVID-19—we’ve tested, determined that being a frontline worker puts you at risk, and proved that masks and vaccines make a difference, and now we’re (finally) spreading these small miracles across the country.

Now compare that with our approach to firearm injury. In 1996, the now infamous Dickey Amendment was passed. It ostensibly banned use of government funds to advocate for gun control. But after its passage, all the money that our country’s research institutions had received for firearm-injury prevention dried up until recently. As a result, the number of government-funded studies on firearm-injury prevention has ranged from one-fiftieth to one-hundredth that for diseases and injuries that kill similar numbers of people. That means that we have had no reliable data on injuries and minimal data on deaths. We have also been stuck in tired arguments between banning guns and

arming everyone, instead of doing the hard work to reduce risk and improve safety.

TO MOVE FORWARD requires that we really, finally, use a basic, four-step public-health approach.

First, we need accurate data. The American people deserve to know who is hurt, and where, and why. We deserve to know what makes some firearm owners safe, and others not. We deserve to know which policies are effective, and which aren’t.

Second, this approach requires nonpartisan money to create answers and drive change. The solutions may involve effective policies, but they may also include changes in the

ways guns are engineered, changes in beliefs about risk or changes in economic incentives for safety.

Third, once we know what works, we need to scale it up, quickly. A few examples, among many: violence-interruption programs like Advance Peace have effectively decreased gun homicides in cities in California; innovative suicide-prevention programs like Lock2Live.org help ER doctors counsel suicidal patients on safer storage of guns. These programs and others deserve investment. And with proper research funding, there will be many, many more to come.

Finally, a successful public-health approach to firearm injury requires that we stop pointing fingers and instead work together. Some of the most promising approaches to firearm-injury prevention are true partnerships between those who are experts in firearms and those who are experts in health.

Because, honestly, both sides of the debate are right. Yes, we would have zero gun deaths if we had zero guns. But a gun does not go off on its own; there is always a person behind it. Ultimately, there are too many guns in the hands of people whose risk changes in an instant. The public-health approach requires that we talk about both the object and the person.

Ranney is an emergency physician and associate dean at Brown University School of Public Health and chief research officer of AFFIRM Research



In Boulder, Colo., mourners attend a vigil for victims of the shooting at a King Soopers grocery store on March 25

SHORT READS

► Highlights from stories on time.com/ideas

Grief and anger after tragedy

If you were surprised by the anti-Asian violence in Atlanta, you haven’t been listening, writes Eric Nam, a Korean-American singer-songwriter who grew up in the city. **“Please hear us now because being silent now is being complicit.”**

The case for keeping the filibuster

Maintaining the filibuster carries a cost, but ending it is not the solution, writes TIME columnist and *Divided We Fall* author David French. **“This would be a serious mistake that would enhance partisan polarization and increase political instability. There are better ways to achieve policy reform.”**

Ending the war in Afghanistan

President Biden should stick to the May 1 deadline for withdrawing from Afghanistan, argue Trita Parsi and Adam Weinstein of the Quincy Institute. **“If Biden chooses to stay, every dead soldier, every family broken and every opportunity wasted to build back better at home will rest on his shoulders and taint his legacy.”**

THE RISK REPORT

The new price of doing business in China

By Ian Bremmer



NO OTHER COUNTRY has done a better job of channeling the profit-maximizing drive of private corporations into geopolitical gains in recent years than communist China, the irony of which is lost on precisely no one.

The latest drama surrounds Nike, H&M and a slew of other Western clothing brands that voiced concern over reports of widespread human-rights abuses of the Muslim ethnic minority Uighurs by the Chinese government in Xinjiang. Multinationals work hard to avoid getting pulled into geopolitics, but reports of labor camps out of Xinjiang—which produces about 20% of the world’s cotton—made it much harder for them to continue doing so. Add in the increased fervor on social media that demands more corporations take stances on hot-button political issues and suddenly Western companies had a much harder time avoiding the trade-off of access vs. values.

Companies like Nike have no problem jumping into the political fray in the U.S. (See: the Colin Kaepernick ad campaign.) But how to respond when boycotts are threatened both from its customers in a free society and from those under an authoritarian government in a country that accounts for nearly a quarter of its global sales? Nike thought its measured responses were an acceptable balance, not drawing too much of Beijing’s ire while also acknowledging the concerns of Western consumers about possible labor camps. But then the U.S.—alongside Canada, the U.K. and the E.U.—decided on March 22 to slap sanctions on Chinese officials over the treatment of the Uighurs (the first time the U.K. and the E.U. have leveled human-rights-related sanctions against China in 30 years). At that point, Chinese social media dredged up Nike’s statement as proof of anti-Chinese sentiment, leading to calls for boycotts.

It’s unclear how successful these pres-

sure campaigns will be, both in terms of companies’ bottom lines and of getting them to endorse the desired political line. The *South China Morning Post* is reporting that the boycott against Nike is “losing steam.” On the other hand, companies like Skechers have pushed back in recent weeks on claims of forced labor made by the Australian Strategic Policy Institute, an “alternative perspective” picked up by the state-sponsored *China Daily*. As Twitter can tell you, the most effective way of punishing someone is deplatforming them, which China opted to do with H&M, scrubbing its presence from e-commerce sites Alibaba and JD.com.

WILL CHINA do the same with Nike? Hard to say at this point, especially because Beijing will host the 2022 Winter Olympics, less than 12 months away. Already, some Republicans are making

The Winter Olympics heavily feature the countries most likely to speak out

life difficult for the Biden Administration by demanding the U.S. boycott the Games; others are calling for more targeted forms of boycotts that allow U.S. athletes to compete but pressure Western companies to stay home. In the coming months, calls like that will only grow louder, and

not just in the U.S.; the Winter Olympics heavily feature the countries most likely to speak out against human-rights abuses—the U.S., Canada, the Nordics and others. Even if a boycott doesn’t materialize, athletes have minds of their own, and the Olympics have historically been venues for public protests.

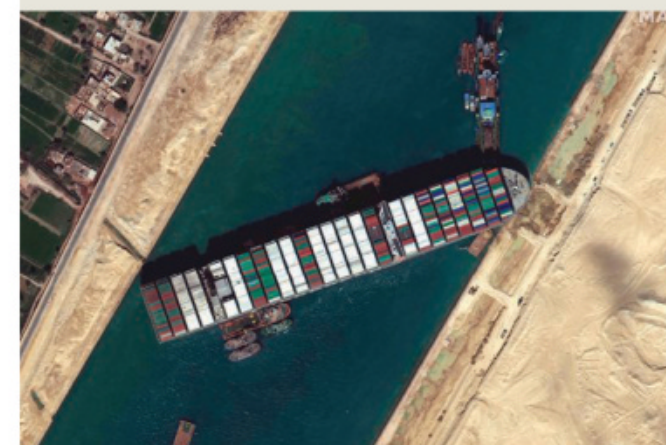
If you’re Beijing, the crux of the issue is this: there comes a point where pushing companies too hard risks their leaving altogether, which means losing whatever influence you have over them. Beijing must ask itself: Does it want some influence all over the world, or complete influence over just part of it? As globalization fractures further, both countries and corporations will be forced to make decisions they had been avoiding for decades. □

WORLD

The shipping crisis

As the world watched the large container ship *Ever Given* block the vital shipping artery of the Suez Canal, I thought back to my own trips through the canal as a U.S. Navy captain and admiral. There is a fundamental lesson to be relearned here about the criticality of a handful of so-called choke points around the world upon which global shipping depends. These are spots where traffic patterns collide and the tens of thousands of ships under way on the world’s oceans at any given moment come together in tightly managed traffic schemes. They represent critical nodes that make navigation faster and easier and allow container and cargo ships to make faster journeys. The key ones are the Strait of Malacca, the Bosphorus Strait, the Strait of Bab el Mandeb and the Strait of Hormuz. The other canal, of course, is the Panama Canal.

Given the stakes, the International Maritime Organization, a U.N. body, is perhaps the most obvious choice for international authority over these bodies of water. —Admiral James Stavridis (ret.) is the author of the novel 2034



Container ship *Ever Given* stuck in the Suez Canal

TheView Essay

SOCIETY

My adoption didn't make me less Korean

By Nicole Chung

FOR THE PAST YEAR, AND ESPECIALLY SINCE THE devastating Atlanta-area murders on March 16, many of my Asian American friends have been sharing deeply personal, painful stories of talking with their parents and elders, pleading with them to take care, being exhorted to be careful in turn. As an adoptee, I don't really have Asian elders in my family—or many elders at all, since the deaths of my father, grandmother and mother. Yet I've found myself wondering: If my adoptive parents were alive, witnessing the spike in anti-Asian racism and violence in the U.S. and around the world—with Asian women the most common targets—would they be concerned about me? Would they understand why I cried when I told my own Korean American daughters about the spa shootings? Would I have reached out to them during this past hard, heavy month, or held back, uncertain of how to share my fear and rage as the only Asian in my white family?

My parents loved me and would have done anything within their power for me. But one thing they struggled to do, at least fully and consistently, was to see and understand me as a Korean American woman. Acknowledging it flew in the face of everything “experts” had told them when they adopted me in the early 1980s—the adoption agency, the social worker, the judge had all maintained that it wouldn't, shouldn't matter. So we never talked explicitly about race when I was younger, even though I was usually the only Asian kid in every room; the closest they came were statements such as “We would have adopted you if you were Black, white or polka-dotted” and “We're all the same on the inside.” Even after I grew up, I cannot recall having a single conversation with them about anti-Asian racism specifically. Not the “model minority” myth. Not perpetual-foreigner syndrome. Not the exotification and fetishization of Asian women. Not the history of American imperialism that is partially responsible for my birth family's and my presence in this country.

Often, people who've read my memoir will note my white family's “color-blind” approach and ask whether this led to me thinking of myself as white. My answer is always swift, unequivocal: no, I never thought I was white. I don't think my adoptive parents thought of me as white either, nor do I believe they imagined their whiteness would extend to me through proxy or proximity, because they didn't think much about their whiteness at all—one of the manifestations of white privilege is *not* having to think about it. But they did assume that I'd be protected from racism because the world would see me as they did—their child, no more, no less—and as my race was irrelevant to them, they could not imagine anyone else caring about it either.

I've lost track of how many times my relatives told me, “I just don't think of you as Korean.” But from early

>
*Demonstrators
at an AAPI Rally
Against Hate in
New York City
on March 21*

*The truth
is that it
is entirely
possible to
love and care
for one Asian
American—
'your' Asian
American—
and not see
other Asians
as equally,
fully human*



childhood, I understood that other people certainly did: white adults called me an “Asian princess” or asked where I was from; white boys at school chanted racist songs at me; a white girl singled me out at recess and demanded to know whether my “Asian vagina” was different from hers. While my adoptive family saw me as almost raceless and therefore safe from racists, I lived every day from the age of 7, when I heard my first slur from a classmate, understanding that my Korean face made me hypervisible where we lived—and that it could also make me a target.

SINCE THE START of the pandemic and the racist scapegoating that has persisted throughout, I've often thought of the many thousands of Asian American kids currently growing up in white families and white spaces. Our experiences are of course not interchangeable, but I know it can feel like a unique burden when you witness or experience racism in a



kind of isolation, unable to retreat and process your rage or sorrow with people who also know what it's like to live in an Asian body. When the constant labor of pointing out or educating others about the racism you face doesn't necessarily stop at home. When, even within your own family, you might hear people stereotype or mock Asians, use Asian slurs. I wasn't surprised to learn that Cherokee County sheriff's office Captain Jay Baker, who stated that the Atlanta shooter was having "a really bad day" and was found to have promoted racist T-shirts that read COVID 19 IMPORTED VIRUS FROM CHY-NA on his Facebook profile, has an adopted Vietnamese brother. The truth is that it is entirely possible to love and care for one Asian American—"your" Asian American—and not see other Asians as equally, fully human.

Before and after the 2016 election, I tried to explain to my parents how it felt to live and raise Korean American children, their grandchildren, in a

country where so many racists seemed emboldened by Donald Trump's lies and attacks. I remember pleading with them more than once: "I need you to hear me and believe that this racism is real, and that we experience it." I cannot say we found precisely the common ground I wanted, but at times I felt we were moving closer to it.

Over the years, I've talked with so many other transracial adoptees who, like me, have undertaken the task of asking, sometimes begging our adoptive relatives to acknowledge our experiences; to stand with us; to challenge the racism endemic in our society as well as our own families and communities. Now, in this moment, I hope that every white parent of an Asian child is paying attention to the rise in anti-Asian hate. I hope that white people with Asian family members recognize and internalize the fact that no amount of love, good intentions, assimilation or proximity to whiteness will protect

their loved ones from racism. I hope that every parent is thinking about how they will talk about anti-Asian prejudice with their children.

IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO KNOW what my own parents might have said about this wave of hatred and violence, part of a long history of anti-Asian racism. By the time the former President began calling COVID-19 "the Chinese virus," by the time racists began shouting and tweeting (and spray-painting) the term *kung flu*, my father was gone and my mother's cancer had spread, and the difficult conversations left to us were about our grief and how much we loved and missed one another. Like most everyone who has lost one parent, let alone two, I've had to accept that there are questions I'll never get answers to, things we'll never be able to settle. That my parents didn't entirely understand or accept my racial reality will always be with me, part of my adoption story—but it's not the most important through line of our story as a family, nor does it typically ascend to the forefront of my memories of them. They were, perhaps, vindicated in this: our love for one another *was* what mattered most, in the end.

Because of that love, which I've never doubted, my best guess is that they would have tried to follow when I drew a connection between the cresting anti-Asian hatred and the steady churn of dread and anger I've known over the past year. I think that the people who long tried to keep me safe would have asked me to be careful now; that the parents who never stopped worrying about me would have at least tried to understand my worry as the mother of Asian American children. At the same time, when I hear my mother's voice in my head—as I still do, and have, nearly every day since she died in May—she is forever reminding me to trust myself, to know my value, to focus on what feels most important and life-giving and fulfilling. I know that the last thing either of my parents would have wanted was for me to despair, or live my life in fear. And so, for their sake and my own, I won't.

Chung is the author of the memoir All You Can Ever Know



Religion

Keeping the Faith

JOE BIDEN'S PRESIDENCY HAS
HIGHLIGHTED THE RIFTS IN THE
AMERICAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

By Brian Bennett



*Biden leaves
services Dec. 12 at
St. Joseph on the
Brandywine, his
home church in
Wilmington, Del.*

PHOTOGRAPH BY CHIP
SOMODEVILLA

Religion

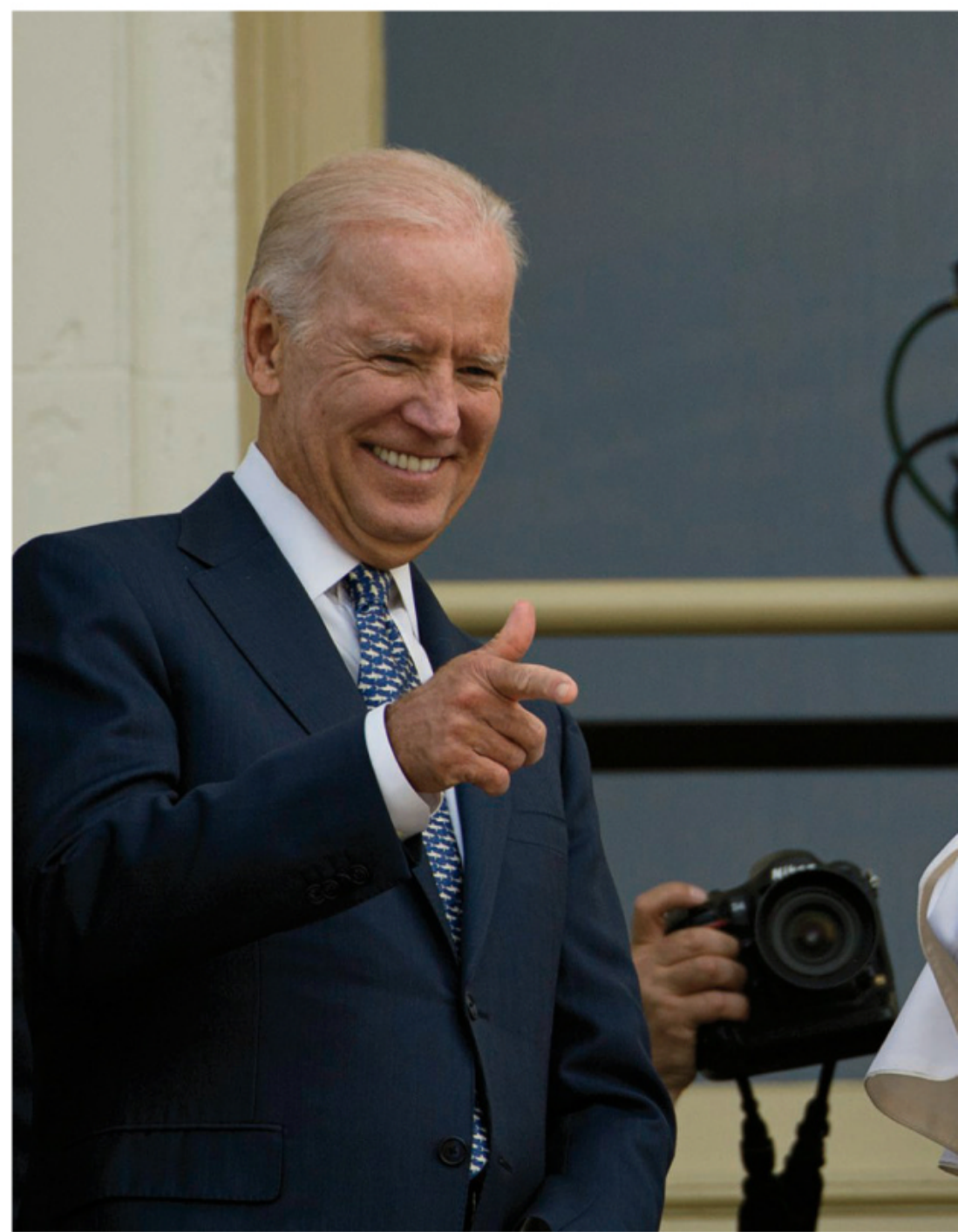
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THE HYMNS OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH HAVE BEEN THE SOUNDTRACK to Joe Biden's life. He attends Mass on Sundays and holy days, and before major events. In Oval Office meetings, Biden sometimes pulls from his pocket a string of rosary beads that belonged to his late son Beau; in quieter moments, Biden will walk his fingers down the beads while saying the holy rosary, a series of meditative prayers. The day the 2020 election was called for Biden, just before he and his family greeted a cheering crowd in Wilmington, Del., a Catholic priest was asked to call in over Zoom to pray with the President-elect and his family. They bowed their heads to the prayer of St. Francis: "Lord, make me an instrument of your peace; where there is hatred, let me sow love."

While Biden's faith is deeply felt, his election has exposed divisions at the highest levels of the Catholic Church. Within days of his victory, 10 of the nation's most powerful bishops took the extraordinary step of launching a "working group" on how to approach a Catholic President like Joe Biden. The panel met twice over Zoom, in December and January. Led by Archbishop Allen Vigneron of Detroit, it included New York's Cardinal Timothy Dolan, who offered prayers at President Trump's 2017 Inauguration, the 2020 Republican National Convention and both parties' conventions in 2012, as well as San Francisco's Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone and Archbishop Joseph Naumann of Kansas City, Kans., both of whom have suggested Biden should be denied the sacred rite of Communion for his stance on abortion. On the table in the discussions, according to three Catholic officials familiar with the group's work, were the questions of how to respond to Biden's policies that conflict with Catholic teaching and, according to one, "how to save Biden's soul."

Biden's election comes at a complicated moment for the Catholic Church in America, which continues to reckon with a sexual-abuse scandal (and subsequent cover-up) that has caused widespread disenchantment with the institution. On one hand, Biden's ascension is a capstone of the faith's march to political acceptance. The nation's second Catholic President oversees a government with unprecedented representation for the church. Six of nine Supreme Court Justices are Catholic, as well as the Speaker of the House, at least eight Cabinet secretaries and multiple other members of the Administration. One-fifth of all votes in the 2020 election were cast by Catholics, roughly half of them for Biden.

While Biden campaigned on some key policies the church favors—including advancing racial justice, ending the death penalty, addressing climate change and aiding refugees—he also advocates policies out of step with Catholic doctrine, such as expanding access to reproductive health care and increasing gay and transgender rights. For many top bishops and conservative voters, Biden embodies a more liberal version of the faith that poses a threat to the future of the church in America. His election "exposes a divide among American Catholics that's been there for a long time," says Maureen O'Connell, a religion professor at La Salle University. "There's a big chasm, a growing chasm."



The day Biden was inaugurated, L.A. Archbishop José Gomez, head of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, released a statement saying some of Biden's positions "advance moral evils." Other church leaders felt Gomez went too far. Cardinal Wilton Gregory, who oversees the churches Biden worships at in Washington, said Gomez's comments were "ill-timed." Chicago Cardinal Blase Cupich, who has close ties to Pope Francis, described

PREVIOUS PAGES AND ABOVE: GETTY IMAGES (3)



Top: John F. Kennedy, the nation's first Roman Catholic President, greets the newly elected Pope Paul VI at the Vatican in July 1963. Bottom: Biden with Pope Francis in Washington on Sept. 24, 2015, after the Pontiff's address to a joint session of Congress

the statement as “ill-considered.”

The schism affects all Americans. In a deeply divided country, the Catholic vote has been a key target for both major political parties. Democrats once relied on Catholics, while Republicans see making gains with the faithful—particularly Hispanic Catholics who are increasingly sustaining parishes across the U.S.—as part of a quest to reverse the slow decline of their core demographic: older white voters. That’s one reason Biden has set out to strengthen relationships with Catholic faith-based organizations, making the case that the Administration is doing important work to alleviate poverty, set a more humane immigration policy and stop executions.

All of which means that Joe Biden’s particular brand of Catholicism is not just a matter for bishops to debate. As Easter, the holiest day in Christianity, approaches on April 4, the questions of how Catholicism has framed Biden’s life, and how his life has framed his approach to his faith, have become matters of historic importance at a pivotal movement for the church—and for America.

BIDEN HAS DESCRIBED attending Mass as an occasion for solitary reflection. He does it even when he’s on the road. In late October 2019, while campaigning in South Carolina, he walked one Sunday into the sanctuary of St. Anthony Catholic Church in Florence, in the state’s northeast coastal plains. The next day, St. Anthony’s priest told news outlets that he had refused Biden the Holy Communion—the sacred act of taking bread and wine, as the body and blood of Jesus, at the end of the Mass—because Biden’s abortion policies conflicted with Catholic teaching.

Biden’s stance on abortion is among an increasingly liberal set of positions he has taken on matters of church doctrine. A few months earlier, as he prepared to roll out his plan to expand federal health care coverage, Biden dropped his long-standing support for the Hyde Amendment, the 1970s law that prohibits federal funds being used to subsidize abortion. Biden had supported the Hyde Amendment for decades. In the 1980s, he even voted for a constitutional amendment that would allow states to overturn *Roe v. Wade*. But as Vice President in May 2012, Biden unexpectedly announced his

support for gay marriage—beating President Obama to the punch. (Obama expressed his support for same-sex marriage three days later.)

Like most things in Biden’s life, his approach to his faith was informed by his childhood in Scranton, Pa., and Wilmington, Del. Biden’s mother, Catherine Finnegan Biden, set the tone in the family, attending church every Sunday. As a young man, Biden considered joining the priesthood. He was 18 when John F. Kennedy became the country’s first Catholic President, breaking through decades of widespread hostility toward Catholics that was marked by false conspiracy theories that a U.S. President who was Catholic would be subordinate to the Pope in Rome. Kennedy’s election inspired a new generation of American Catholics, including Biden, to pursue public service.

When Biden was in his twenties, 2,000 bishops met in Rome from 1962 to 1965 for the Second Vatican Council—the first reappraisal of church practices in nearly a century. A raft of liberalizing reforms emerged. The bishops decided church services should be more accessible to ordinary Catholics. Mass could be said in languages other than Latin, and priests could conduct Mass facing the congregation. Catholics were free to pray with other Christians and encouraged to work toward the common good with believers of non-Christian faiths.

Biden’s childhood preceded Vatican II, and his adulthood began after it, making him fluent in the signs and symbols of both eras. His childhood was filled with Latin Mass and saying the rosary. His favorite hymn, say two people close to him, is the late-1970s acoustic-guitar staple “On Eagle’s Wings.” But as with any major change, there came a backlash to the efforts to liberalize church doctrine. The 1980s were marked by a growing culture war—both inside the Catholic Church and across the country—over abortion and gay rights, which continues to split both the church and the nation.

Biden and other prominent Catholic Democrats have long sought to thread the needle. In 1984, New York Governor Mario Cuomo was one of the first major Catholic politicians to argue he could be personally against abortion while working politically to uphold the right to the procedure enshrined in *Roe v. Wade*. Like

Religion

Cuomo, Biden says his personal beliefs are consistent with church teachings, but he can't support policies that would force those beliefs on others.

Biden, who has described his personal interest in theology as his "avocation," discussed this question when he met privately at the Vatican with Pope Benedict XVI in 2011. "He wasn't judgmental," Biden said of the conservative former Pontiff in a later interview with the Jesuit publication *America*. "It was like going to theology class. I came away enlivened from the discussion."

Pope Francis has taken more liberal positions than his predecessor on issues ranging from openness to gay individuals to more roles for women in the church. Francis' focus on mercy and tolerance over doctrine and tradition has brought these schisms to the fore. But the Pope has also shown there's a limit to how far church doctrine can bend. Francis has upheld the primacy of the church's teaching on preventing abortions, and on March 15 he released a Vatican decree affirming that priests cannot bless same-sex marriages.

That's left Biden paraphrasing the late New York governor on supporting public policy that's seemingly out of step with the Holy Father. "I'm a practicing Catholic," Biden told MSNBC's Andrea Mitchell in a 2019 interview, "but I've never let my religious beliefs, which I accept based on church doctrine—they call it *de fide* doctrine—to impose that view on other people."

AS PRESIDENT, Biden's personal faith plays out in public ways. Rather than downplaying his religion, as Kennedy did, he has lived it publicly. A framed photo of Biden shaking hands with Pope Francis rests on the table over Biden's left shoulder as he sits at the Resolute Desk in the Oval Office. In his speeches, he quotes from the Bible and invokes Catholic saints and philosophers. He made the sign of the cross at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier when he visited after his Inauguration.

When Biden is home in Wilmington, his longtime aide and confidant, former Senator Ted Kaufman, often joins him for Mass at his home church, St. Joseph on the Brandywine. Biden's faith, Kaufman says, has not only helped him through the tragedies of losing his first wife and daughter in a car crash and his son Beau

to cancer. It has also steeled him against the criticism of his faith leveled by fellow Catholics. "The attacks on him that he's not doing God's will, they bounce off him. This has been going on for a long time," says Kaufman. "He knows who he is. He knows what he believes."

Justin Dillon, a 46-year-old lawyer in Washington, D.C., doesn't doubt the sincerity of Biden's Catholic faith. But he struggles with whether Biden should be allowed to take Communion given his strong support for policies that increase access to abortion. He is concerned about the example this sets for what it means to follow Catholic teachings on abortion and other controversial social issues. He worries liberals will ask conservative Catholics like him, "If Biden is Catholic and he can get with the program, why can't you?"

Some church leaders are concerned that Biden may sow confusion over what it means to be devout. Conservative

'The attacks on him that he's not doing God's will, they bounce off him.'

TED KAUFMAN

Catholics say Biden's prominence legitimizes what is pejoratively referred to by some as "cafeteria Catholicism"—the idea that Catholics can choose which church teachings they adhere to. "We must pray and fast that the President will cease attempting to confuse people about Catholic teaching by trampling on the sanctity of human life while presenting himself as a devout Catholic," said Kansas City Archbishop Naumann. "The presidency does not empower him to define Catholic doctrine and moral teaching."

The contradiction between Biden's outward faith and policies that appear to conflict with those teachings "creates confusion among the faithful about what the church actually teaches on these questions," said Archbishop Gomez, who called for the working group of church leaders who discussed how to minister to the President. (After two long Zoom deliberations, the bishops agreed that Biden's priests in Delaware and D.C.

should be responsible.)

This isn't just a matter of pastoral duty for the church; it's a matter of power and reach. For all the influence that American Catholics now have at the top of government, the church in America is declining. It counts some 5 million fewer members than a decade ago, according to the Pew Research Center, and there's little agreement on how to reverse the exodus.

If conservative Catholics blame a lack of clarity in church teachings, more liberal-minded Catholics believe the church isn't evolving fast enough. Amid this debate, Biden's approach to his faith has emerged as a sort of Rorschach test. "His Catholicism doesn't match our caricature of what Catholics are supposed to be like, which is obsessed with the culture wars," says Natalia Imperatori-Lee, professor of religious studies at Manhattan College. But Biden, she says, is in many ways an "ordinary" Catholic. "The majority aren't out there screaming outside abortion clinics or rejecting their children for being gay," says Imperatori-Lee. "The regular average Catholic is a lot like Joe Biden. Someone who has suffered in his life. Someone who has leaned on his faith during times of deep tragedy. Someone who continues to lean on his faith for strength and moral guidance."

It is that broader view of the role of faith in one's life that Pope Francis has embraced, believing that will make the church more relevant in a changing world. When Francis first donned his white papal cassock in 2013, he said the church must move beyond tensions over abortion and gay marriage and "heal wounds." In January, he officially decreed that women could serve as lectors and distribute Communion at Mass, a practice already common in many churches. He's preached that gay, lesbian and transgender Catholics should be welcomed into the church with love.

Whatever dissonance may exist between the Holy Father's teachings and Biden's policy agenda hasn't gotten in the way of a warm relationship between the two. After Cardinal Cupich said Archbishop Gomez's Inauguration Day critique of Biden's policies was "ill-considered," he was granted an audience with Francis, a move that Vatican watchers interpreted as support for a subtle handling of the President's positions. Pope Francis reached out personally to



Biden after he was elected, say two people close to Biden, sending Biden a signed copy of his book *Let Us Dream*.

Some top Catholics saw in Francis' outreach a clear message. "Nuance is good," says Sister Patricia McDermott, president of the Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, who notes Biden is "not going to get all the issues right from some Catholic perspectives. But there is nuance within our Catholic community as well."

WHEN BIDEN SPEAKS to the country about the losses sustained in the pandemic, he's using muscles honed by years of attending ceremonies and funerals, including those of his own son, daughter and first wife. "There's a ritual to mourning that he's very familiar with. He's in a sense presiding at those memorials because he's been part of that his whole life," says Father Kevin O'Brien, a Jesuit priest who has often ministered to Biden and his family at important moments in their lives.

The President has said his approach to public service is guided by the first two commandments, "Love thy God" and "Love thy neighbor." In his family, that meant performing acts of outreach and kindness based on the idea that everyone is entitled to dignity. This, he says,

Biden clutches a rosary after laying a wreath on Sept. 11, 2020, at the Flight 93 National Memorial, near Shanksville, Pa.

is how his faith has defined his approach to governing. "I can see his heart is led by the Catholic social teaching," says Bishop Mario Dorsonville, who was part of a group of bishops discussing Biden's presidency. A more open immigration policy is "one of his points of devotion," says Dorsonville, who leads a committee on migration for the conference of bishops. Asked about Biden's support for policies that run counter to Catholic teachings, Dorsonville says, "I don't think it is a good thing for me to point fingers at anyone, because that's the role of God." But, he said, when it comes to church teachings, Catholics should "take the whole package."

Some members of Biden's inner circle say Biden's expression of his faith could bring more American Catholics to the church and help narrow its divisions. O'Brien, the Jesuit priest who has been a longtime religious confidant of Biden's, says that Biden often thinks about both ideological rifts. "Just as he hopes to heal the country politically by being a uniter and by finding common ground, I think for American Catholics, he can help us

move beyond ideological divisions to find common ground," says O'Brien, who was recently placed on leave as president of Santa Clara University pending an investigation into allegations he overstepped rules for Jesuit behavior. "He knows how to navigate that because he knows the language of religion. Whether a bishop agrees or disagrees with him, they can respect this man cares about his faith."

Biden's personal faith can't be untangled from his politics. On Nov. 7, after a prayer over Zoom with O'Brien, he walked onto a stage to give his campaign victory speech, facing a Wilmington parking lot filled with supporters. In the last days of his campaign, Biden told the crowd, he was thinking about "On Eagle's Wings," a hymn that meant a lot to Beau as well. "It captures the faith that sustains me, and which I believe sustains America," Biden said, and quoted a few verses.

Biden closed by recalling what his grandfather in Scranton would say to him as he walked out the door: "Joey, keep the faith." In his telling, Biden's grandmother would one-up her husband, yelling, "No, Joey, spread it!"

"Spread the faith," Biden told the crowd as fireworks erupted. "God love you all." —*With reporting by* LESLIE DICKSTEIN *and* SIMMONE SHAH □

Twyla Joseph
in Islip Terrace,
N.Y., on Feb. 5, as
her day begins



A photograph of a person's shoulder and arm in the foreground, looking out a window. The window reflects a blurred city street scene with trees and buildings. The title 'THE COLLEGE GAP' is overlaid on the image.

THE COLLEGE GAP

**FROM VIRTUAL
HIGH SCHOOL TO
A HARD REALITY**

page 38

**WHAT GUIDANCE
COUNSELORS
SAW**

page 44

**SOLVING
STUDENT
DEBT**

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THE LOST YEAR

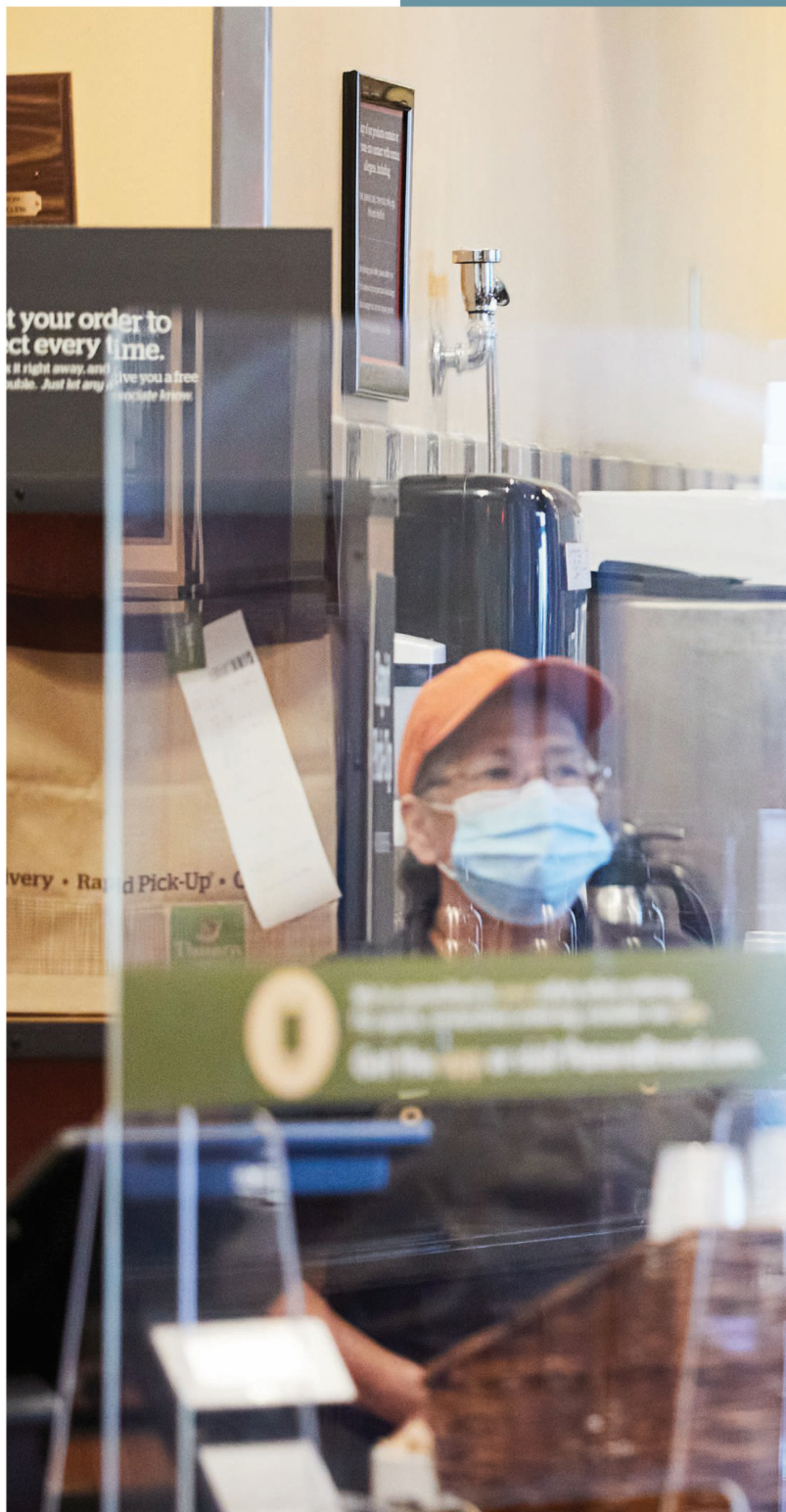
On track for college before the pandemic, some high school seniors lost more than time

BY KATIE REILLY

THE FIRST SIGN THAT TWYLA JOSEPH'S COLLEGE APPLICATION process was not going to go as planned came on March 13, 2020, when, a day before her scheduled SAT, she learned the test had been canceled. The May and June tests were also canceled as coronavirus cases surged.

Joseph never got to take the admissions test. She barely knows her high school teachers now that she takes all her classes online at home in Islip Terrace, N.Y. She missed out on seasons of varsity cross-country and track, and lost contact with the coach who "used to give us really good life advice." During the five months she was furloughed from her job at Panera Bread, she spent the money she'd been saving for college. And while she's back at work now for about 28 hours per week, often dealing with customers who refuse to wear face masks, she is worried not only about whether she will be able to afford college in the fall but also about whether it even makes sense to enroll if she'll be sitting at home taking classes online.

"I can't go to college with \$900 in my savings account," says Joseph, 17, a senior at Central Islip High School. "I literally just thought, What if I took a year off, maybe a year or two, and tried to wait till things were back to normal? I definitely thought, Maybe I just shouldn't go. Maybe it's not worth it."



Millions of students across the country are wrestling with similar decisions. Estimates from U.S. Census Bureau surveys conducted biweekly since Aug. 19, 2020, indicate that anywhere from 7.7 million to 10 million adults canceled plans to take postsecondary classes last fall because of financial constraints related to the pandemic. The number of high school graduates who immediately went on to college in fall 2020 declined 6.8% compared with the previous year, according to the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center. The drop was more stark at high-poverty high schools, where the number of graduates enrolling in college fell 11.4%, compared with a drop of 2.9% at low-poverty high schools.

It's the latest example of how the pandemic is hindering educational opportunities for the most vulnerable students,



Joseph readies a takeout order at Panera Bread café in Bay Shore, N.Y.

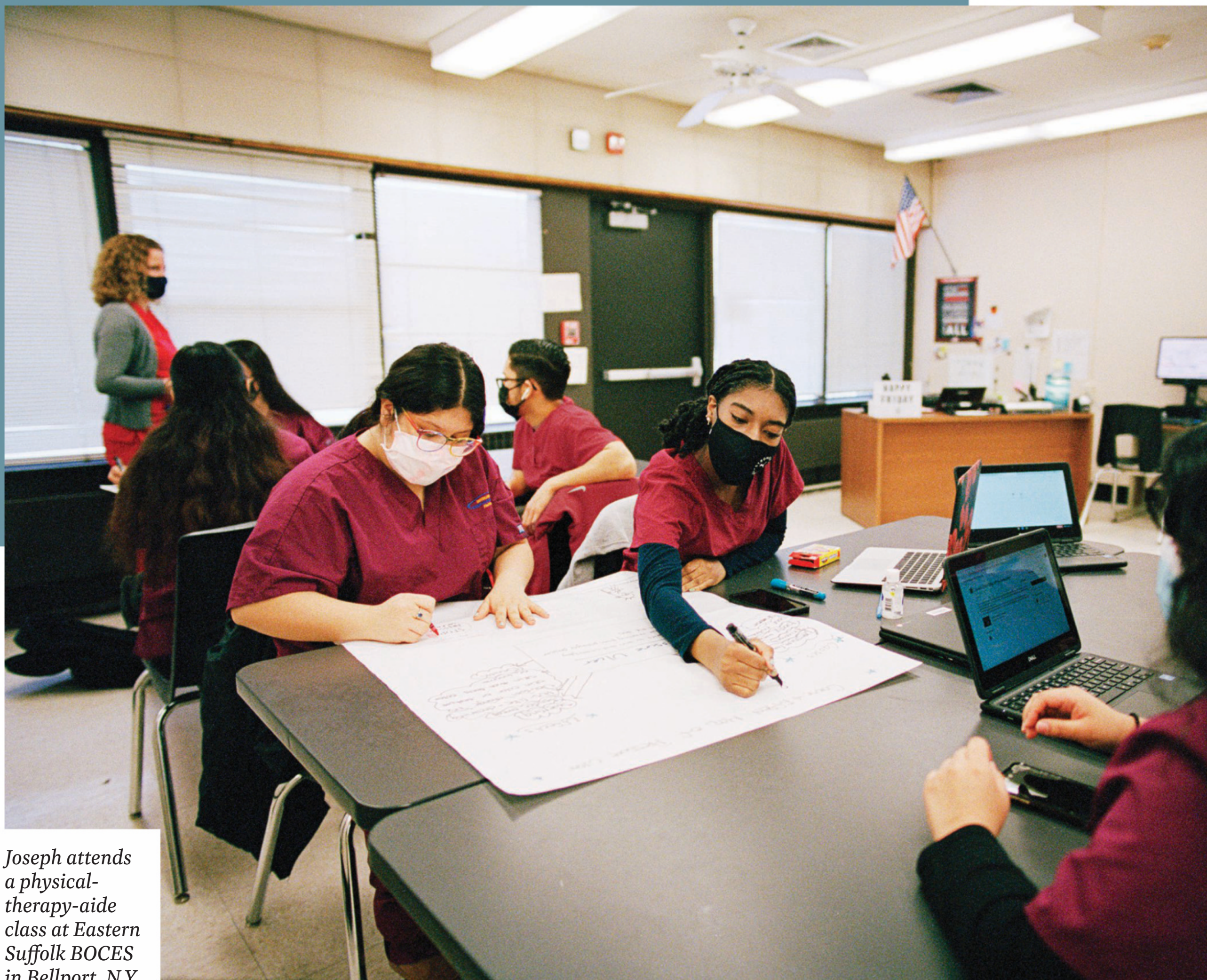
likely limiting their career options and earning potential. And as more people lose access to higher education, the country will feel the consequences of a less educated workforce. “Our economic recovery is at stake,” says Sara Goldrick-Rab, founding director of the Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice at Temple University in Philadelphia.

The drop is being felt most by community colleges, which educate more than a third of U.S. college students and which serve as an entry point to higher education for many first-generation and low-income students. (Applications are actually at record levels at many of the country’s most selective universities this year after they suspended SAT and ACT requirements.) In the fall 2020 semester, freshman enrollment across all colleges plummeted a record 13% from a year

earlier, and at community colleges, the drop was 21%, with declines concentrated among Native American, Black and Hispanic students, according to the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center.

The same troubling pattern is discernible in who is now applying for college. According to data from Common App, which is used by more than 900 colleges, total applications grew this academic year, but the number of first-generation applicants dropped.

“It’s a lost senior class,” says Sara Urquidez, executive director of the Academic Success Program, which provides college counseling to 15 public and charter high schools with large low-income populations in Dallas and Houston. For the students thwarted by the pandemic, she says, “it’s a cycle of



Joseph attends a physical-therapy-aide class at Eastern Suffolk BOCES in Bellport, N.Y.

poverty that will continue for another generation because the Class of 2021 didn't get the same opportunity that their wealthier counterparts are going to get to be able to go to college."

The number of students completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) also declined 9.1% by March 5 compared with this time last year, and fell more sharply at high schools serving large populations of low-income students and students of color, according to a tracker by the National College Attainment Network (NCAN). FAFSA completion is "the proverbial canary in the coal mine," an indicator of whether students will enroll in college, says Kim Cook, executive director of NCAN. "We're afraid they're just taking themselves out of the game," she says. "They have decided it's just not possible."

ACROSS THE U.S., campus tours have gone virtual. Counselors who once displayed seniors' college acceptance letters in school hallways and organized celebratory pep rallies have resorted to emails and slide-shows to try to motivate students. Many high school seniors are isolated from friends, teachers and counselors, and are taking on extra jobs or caregiving roles at home to help their families. In this lonesome environment, they're expected to plan their postgraduation future.

6.8%

Decline in high school graduates who went directly to college in fall 2020 compared with 2019

13%

Drop in overall college-freshman enrollment

At times, Joseph has felt as though she has to do everything on her own, with little help from the adults in her life. Her mother, who grew up in the Caribbean island nation of St. Lucia, didn't attend school in the U.S. and can't offer much guidance. It's been tough to get one-on-one attention

from school counselors who are outnumbered by hundreds of students, and she can't stop by a teacher's classroom to ask for a recommendation letter. "It's like no one's there to check in on us. We only have ourselves," says Joseph. "And I get that older people are stressed out too, so it's really hard to figure out what to do right now."

For those from affluent families, the option may be a gap year to take an unpaid internship, explore a hobby or start a community-service project until things get back to normal. Outdoor-education programs like Outward Bound, which can cost thousands of dollars, saw a surge in demand over the past year.

But that's a "romantic idea that really gets under my skin," says Cook, who warns that low-income students who delay college might never enroll once they lose the resources they had access to in high school. "I don't even want to call it a gap year because I don't believe they're coming back." Studies show that students who delay college are less likely to earn a bachelor's degree than stu-

After classes and her job, Joseph finishes the day doing homework at her kitchen table



dents who enroll in college directly after high school.

On top of school-related challenges, many high school seniors are feeling the weight of the country's simultaneous crises and juggling multiple roles to keep their financially strapped families afloat. In Boston, 17-year-old Kimberly Landaverde's family has worried about making rent since her parents lost work at the beginning of the pandemic. Landaverde, a senior at Boston Latin School, is communicating with their landlord because her mother and father don't speak English, all while attending virtual classes, staying up late to submit college applications and then poring over her parents' tax forms to apply for financial aid.

"I go from filling out my college applications to then checking in and filling out our rental-assistance applications," Landaverde says. She cried out of relief when she got her first college acceptances.

For much of this school year, Milan Powell looked after her little sister and her cousins' children during the day at home in New York City, sometimes tuning in late to her own online classes because of the time spent helping the younger children. "This is probably the worst year to be a senior," says Powell, who attends the Young Women's Leadership School of East Harlem and who finds it difficult to focus on school when her world is in such turmoil.

"If your grades have been impacted because you've been panicking every day about the fact that you're in a pandemic, and not worrying about your schoolwork, well, your scholarship opportunities are kind of down the drain," says the 17-year-old. "For a lot of people, myself included, if they don't get that grant or scholarship, they just can't go."

Countless high school seniors have lost contact with their schools or given up on college, at least for now. In Miami, Othniel Rhoden was on track to be the first in his family to attend college this fall, but the 18-year-old senior at Booker T. Washington Senior High School grew discouraged after a year of not seeing friends or being able to pursue his passions for dance and video-game design, which he'd planned to study in college. He's decided not to apply for the fall semester after all.

"This pandemic has really killed my ambition for school and other stuff I had a passion for," says Rhoden, a participant in First Star, a nonprofit that helps students in foster care apply to college. "It's like a part of me is missing."

Rhoden also feels a responsibility to help support his family. He spends weekdays tuning in to virtual classes in the same room as his six younger siblings, then works weekends as a beach attendant at a Miami Beach hotel, making \$9 an

9.1%

Decline in the number of federal financial-aid forms filed since 2019–20

11.4%

Decline in graduates from high-poverty high schools who went directly to college in fall 2020

hour. “It was bills on top of bills, and my mother needed help with that, so I stepped in,” he says.

His mom and his First Star counselor have been encouraging him to apply to college in the fall, and he has promised to think about it. “Maybe going to college could open another doorway for me to help my family out,” says Rhoden.

Lyndsey C. Wilson, the CEO of First Star, says there was a drop in the program’s Class of 2020 students who went on to two-year or four-year colleges and an increase in those who instead took jobs or joined the military. “It’s incredibly worrisome,” she says. “If the numbers continue to play out the way that they are, we’re going to have a lot more young people working for jobs that aren’t providing a living wage.”

Students in low-income households were much more likely to cancel plans to take college classes than those in high-income households, according to the Census Bureau surveys, which is why experts worry that the students who are forgoing college are the ones who need higher education most. A growing number of jobs now require a postsecondary degree, and nearly all jobs created during the recovery from the Great Recession went to workers with at least some college education, according to a Georgetown University report. Americans with just a high school diploma face higher rates of unemployment and earn \$7,300 to \$26,100 less each year than those with an associate’s or bachelor’s degree, based on median weekly earnings.

Urquidez, the college counselor in Texas, has struggled to reach students online and get them to tune in to virtual sessions on financial aid. In some cases, she doesn’t know where students are, and neither do their teachers. On average at her schools, 85% of students have applied to college so far—down from 95% to 98% in a typical year. Just over a third of seniors at one of her Dallas schools attended a recent in-person event to take yearbook photos, order their cap and gown, and discuss postgraduation plans with counselors. “Everybody’s talking about the enrollment drop for 2020,” Urquidez says. “I think that it’s going to slide further for 2021.”

TYPICALLY, DURING AN ECONOMIC DOWNTURN, college enrollment goes up as people who are unemployed return to school. Last spring, Goldrick-Rab expected community colleges wouldn’t be prepared to accommodate an influx, but it never came. That’s hurting colleges, which need students and the tuition they pay to keep classes going. Ted Mitchell, president of the American Council on Education, said colleges are facing “a crisis of almost unimaginable magnitude” because of declining revenues and the new costs of operating during a pandemic.

It falls to people like Erica Clark to try to reverse that enrollment trend. Clark, a guidance counselor at Booker T. Washington High School in Atlanta, is shepherding nearly 90 seniors through their college applications, largely at a distance, hosting virtual college visits and career talks every week, sending reminders about looming deadlines. She can’t pull students out of class or ask them to stop by her office anymore, so she tries to gauge how they’re feeling over Zoom, and she has lost countless nights of sleep worrying about them. She tracked down one student on the job at Foot Locker to

*Joseph
awaits word
from colleges
at home on
Feb. 21*



get her to complete a missing form. “I know it sounds crazy,” Clark says, “but I just have to meet them where they are.”

“It becomes very overwhelming when you know that this student was destined for greatness, and now I can’t reach them,” she says. Perhaps because of the extra effort, more of Clark’s students have applied to college this year than last, but she’s now concerned about getting them to actually enroll. As graduation nears and they await scholarship decisions, more of them are having second thoughts about college and considering working full time instead or joining the military to cover tuition costs. “It’s like doors are being closed a little bit more to them,” she says. “I just don’t want them to give up the idea of going to college.”

Ellen Peyton, a college and career readiness teacher at



“IT’S LIKE
NO ONE’S THERE
TO CHECK IN
ON US. WE
ONLY HAVE
OURSELVES.”

Twyla Joseph,
Central Islip High School

Madison Shannon Palmer High School in Marks, Miss., shares Clark’s concerns. In October, she organized a drive-in event to help families submit applications for college financial aid. Students and their parents pulled up to a computer in the school parking lot and filled out the required forms from their cars, while counselors offered help from 6 ft. away. But by March, 34% of her students had completed the FAFSA, half as many as last year at this time, she says, and about 40% of seniors aren’t on track to graduate on time. She worries the pandemic will create a generation of students who don’t get the opportunities they deserve. “These are young adults, and they’re coming into their place in society,” Peyton says. “This is a big change in their life, and it has the ability to make or break their future.”

The State University of New York (SUNY), one of the

country’s largest public higher-education systems, saw applications fall about 11% overall as of March 1 compared with last year, and even more among students of color. In response, SUNY eliminated application fees for low-income students, started offering free online job training and college prep to low-income New Yorkers, and launched an outreach program to get underrepresented high school students to apply. “If you throw barriers in their way, they’re not going to come. And it’s going to hurt the university system, and it’s ultimately going to hurt society writ large. You’re just going to further the economic inequality all across the country,” says SUNY chancellor Jim Malatras. “And that’s a moral failure on our part.”

At Compton College, a community college in Compton, Calif., serving mostly Black and Latino students, enrollment fell 27.5% in fall 2020 compared with the previous year. “I expected a decline in enrollment,” says college president Keith Curry. “But I didn’t expect this.” The school is working on outreach to students who had been enrolled at Compton in spring 2020 but withdrew during the pandemic, offering them more financial aid, and improving partnerships with K-12 districts to connect with prospective students.

Congress directed nearly \$40 billion to colleges and universities, which must spend half the money on emergency financial aid for students, as part of the \$1.9 trillion relief package passed March 10. Higher-education advocates had asked for \$97 billion, and many argue that improving college accessibility and affordability is critical if today’s high school seniors are to become the country’s future leaders. President Joe Biden has also proposed making community college tuition-free to boost college access for more students and rebuild the economy. “We’re supposed to be the future,” Rhoden says of his generation. “And I’m not sure how the future will be for us.”

THESE DAYS, when she isn’t working or taking classes, Twyla Joseph is watching YouTube videos with her mother or binge-watching *Criminal Minds* while waiting to hear back from the colleges she applied to. She’s looking forward to the day she can once again go to concerts with friends and volunteer with the immigrant-rights group Make the Road New York.

The pandemic has forced her to rethink her plans and expectations for the future. Because she never was able to take the SAT, she applied only to schools that did not require it. She once considered applying to historically Black colleges and universities in other parts of the country, but to save money and stay closer to her family, she’s now set her sights on the City University of New York or SUNY colleges. It will depend on how much financial aid she receives. She’s also reconsidering her original career goal of becoming an occupational therapist; it would require grad school, and the additional expense and years of schooling are not something Joseph wants to commit to when the future is so uncertain. Instead, she’s planning to study social work or psychology.

One thing that hasn’t changed is her excitement about what college could bring: psychology classes, dorm life, more independence. “I actually want to go to college and learn and meet new people and have different experiences and just make memories,” Joseph says, “if I can do that in a pandemic.” □

A CLOSEUP VIEW OF ANXIETY

Having wreaked havoc on their final year of high school, the pandemic proceeded to disrupt the Class of 2021's postgraduation plans. Some students answered the uncertainty by applying to more colleges than they'd previously planned, perhaps aiming higher. Others saw their best chance at higher education slip away, undone by financial catastrophe the virus brought with it. School counselors, tasked with guiding students through applications and keeping them on track to graduate, also bore witness.

—Katie Reilly

'I worry about their mental health. I worry about their stress level. I worry about them having a senior year. My heart just really goes out to them because they are working so hard ... I want to make sure that they know that there's always help. I worry that they're on the other side of that screen, feeling alone. And I don't want them to feel alone.'

Cherryl Baker,
Mission Hills High School, San Marcos, Calif.

GRIEF AND GRADUATION

We've been virtual now since March 13 of last year. I have students who never received less than a B who have failing grades in multiple classes.

Kids are struggling with a lot. In particular, Atherton is in Louisville, Ky., where Breonna Taylor grew up, went to school and was killed. I have a lot of students who have been struggling with just the social unrest and tension in the city. They are not having an opportunity to process and heal before some-

thing else happens.

Picture a teenager who is grieving, dealing with the pandemic, cut off socially from their friends and school, which is like a happy place, an escape. They don't get to go to school, and then they are having to motivate themselves at 8 o'clock in the morning to get in front of the computer, sign in to class and be ready to learn. And do that every day, day in and day out, in their bedroom.

I don't think people really get the emo-

tional impact. You have kids who are losing family members, grieving, dealing with social unrest and dealing with not having stepped foot in the building one single time their entire senior year.

We're going after the kids and trying to make sure they graduate and get the grades they need. But in addition to that, we have to make sure they're O.K.

Tinika Campbell,
Atherton High School,
Louisville, Ky.

'I think we saw, and probably everyone else saw, students submit more applications ... We saw more people adding more überselective schools to their regular-decision list, almost buying lottery tickets.'

David Rion,
The Loomis Chaffee School, Windsor, Conn.

‘The vast majority of our students are still planning on four-year college right after high school ... We strongly encourage virtual visits, virtual college fairs. We had virtual after-school college meetings, but it’s not the same as physically getting to take that tour and feel the campus environment. That’s always been a really powerful deciding factor for a lot of kids.’

Jennifer Segal,
Boston Latin School,
Boston

‘I can definitely see a decline in the students’ motivation. I can see myself this year really being more of a motivator than I’ve ever been ... It’s been having to motivate them to go to class, turning in an assignment, logging in. Even athletics, having to show up to practice, having to submit an application. It’s everything.’

Camilo Macias,
Desert View High School, Tucson, Ariz.

ZOOMED OUT

It’s pretty common to just interact with students on Zoom, and the camera is turned off, and it’s harder to just get the very basic human-to-human contact points through which we operate—facial expressions, slight movements of our shoulders and hands.

That impacts the ability to develop a relationship in the first place. And I think that’s the starting point for reaching students. If I am to convince a student that they’re ready to go to college, and not only college but to a place across the country that’ll give them good financial aid, I need to establish some credibility. And there needs to be a natural back-and-forth relationship there.

The families from a higher-income background typically had the kind of mental space and time and financial stability to be able to set up pods, and so they’re still able to kind of socialize, and college was just never a question for them. For a lot of lower-income and even middle-income families, they’ve had to reconsider, “Is it worth it for me to take classes next year when I don’t even know if they’ll be in person?”

These are students and families who are thinking pretty much entirely in financial terms. “Is this really going to be worth it? Should I put it off?” And I totally sympathize. I can’t tell you the number

of times I’ve said out loud, “I’m really glad to not be in school in this kind of situation.” Because it is a wildly different learning experience, just having to do it through Zoom.

I think that this last year has been, like, the longest in anyone’s life. I think it has reminded all of us that there’s a big asterisk on the future. And it’s hard to imagine, What will it actually be like in the fall? Will I get to step on a college campus, or am I doing college from home? I think that kind of uncertainty will be a hurdle to completing those tedious last steps before enrolling.

Lesya Bazylewicz,
Woodrow Wilson High School, Dallas

DESPERATE FOR DEBT FORGIVENESS

**The economy wins when
student loans are erased, but
borrowers often struggle to
access relief programs**

BY ALANA SEMUELS

HER \$90,000 IN STUDENT DEBT TRAILED JILL WITKOWSKI Heaps for decades, like a pesky private eye, as she moved from New York to Fort Myers to New Orleans to Annapolis, always hovering to remind her of her negative net worth.

And then one day, while sitting in a coffee shop near Buffalo, she learned it was gone. “Congratulations!” the email from her loan servicer, FedLoan, said. “You qualify for loan forgiveness.” Her balance was now \$0. First, Heaps cried. Then she texted her husband. Then she logged onto the FedLoan website to make sure the email wasn’t some sort of cruel joke.

“It was like I won the lottery,” says Heaps, a 43-year-old environmental lawyer whose loans were forgiven under the Public Service Loan Forgiveness program, which is supposed to allow people who work for nonprofits or the government to wipe out their loans after making 120 payments over 10 years. The program is a boon, but in reality, a tiny fraction of the people who applied for the program have received forgiveness.

*A graduate crosses
the red carpet at
Boston College's
commencement
on May 21, 2018*



PHOTOGRAPH BY DAVID L. RYAN

The sheer balance of student loans in the U.S.—around \$1.6 trillion, up from \$250 billion in 2004—has made student-debt forgiveness a popular idea among politicians like Senators Elizabeth Warren and Chuck Schumer, who introduced a resolution in February calling on President Joe Biden to cancel up to \$50,000 for people with federal student-loan debt. Biden has said he is prepared to forgive \$10,000 in debt for individuals with federal student loans.

The idea is controversial—people who have successfully paid off their loans say it's not fair to erase the debt of others who weren't as fiscally responsible. Plus, widespread forgiveness is expensive—the Warren/Schumer plan could cost as much as \$1 trillion.

But the scope of the economic crisis created by the pandemic, and the fact that borrowers who graduated before 2007, like Heaps, have weathered two massive financial downturns in their professional careers, is bolstering the argument that major fixes are needed. Although student-loan forgiveness did not make it into the American Rescue Plan passed by Congress, the bill does include a provision to make college-loan forgiveness tax-free until Dec. 31, 2025, eliminating an important barrier that would make it easier to implement broader forgiveness in the future.

Heaps' story suggests that forgiveness could be good for the economy in the long run. Once she wasn't paying \$700 a month toward her loans, which still totaled \$36,395 when they were forgiven, Heaps and her husband had enough money for a down payment on what she calls their "forever" home, which they moved into in February. She can finally provide her 4-year-old son with some stability and the confidence that he'll be able to stay in the same school system for as long as the family wants. His parents started a college savings plan for him, in the hope he'll avoid the kind of debt that plagued Heaps for so long.

Research indicates that Heaps' experience isn't unique. One study of people whose loans were canceled when the lender lost important paperwork found that the borrowers, freed from the inertia that often accompanies debt, were more likely than other people to move, change jobs and see pay raises.

Since the first pandemic-era stimulus package was enacted in March 2020, millions of Americans have been able to experience life free of the crippling burden of student-loan payments. The CARES Act paused payments on federal student loans and set a 0% interest rate on those loans through September 2020; the Biden Administration has extended that pause until September 2021, affecting some 42 million borrowers.

"Having the payment suspension is very helpful," says Persis Yu of the National Consumer Law Center (NCLC). "But it makes them kind of realize what it might be like to not have student loan debt at all."

FOR DECADES, young people were told that a college education was the surest path to achieving the American Dream. But as wages have stagnated, many former students who took out loans to pay for school are finding that the well-paying jobs they expected to land have disappeared. The burden falls hardest on Black and Latino students, who are more likely to take out loans than white peers.



Jill Witkowski Heaps was able to buy a house after her student loans were forgiven

For every person like Jill Witkowski Heaps, there are dozens like Sharie Zahab, who graduated from law school in 2000 with about \$83,000 in federal and private loans. She now owes about \$121,000 because of various pauses in payments, which allowed interest to accumulate.

Zahab, 48, has weathered three recessions, in 2001, 2008 and 2020, and has been laid off multiple times. She could have qualified for the Public Service Loan Forgiveness program, since she worked for Legal Aid after law school, but lost that job during the Great Recession. When she found work again at a firm representing landlords, she was no longer in public service and thus ineligible for the program.

Whether borrowers get to pause payments on their loans is sometimes random, as Zahab found after she was laid off again in June 2020. She thought she was receiving a pause on her loans because of the CARES Act, only to learn that her federal loans fall under the Federal Family Education Loan Program, which means they are held by private companies and not eligible for the federal pause.

She then tried to enroll in an income-based repayment program but says her loan servicer, Navient, made it difficult,

demanding a certified letter from the state's unemployment office proving she was jobless. This was the same office that was so overwhelmed with unemployment claims and tech issues at the start of the pandemic that millions of people couldn't access unemployment benefits. "They gave me the worst runaround for months—I literally called them crying," says Zahab.

Zahab's debt has prevented her from living the life she wanted. "I didn't get married because I didn't want to have anybody saddled with my debt," she says. "I didn't have kids because of it. It basically controlled my entire trajectory." (High student-loan debt has been shown to harm women's chances of marriage.) Zahab says she would love to leave her legal career behind and teach, if she could only escape her debt. She's not alone in feeling professionally constrained; a 2017 study found that holders of student debt were less choosy in the job market and more likely to accept suboptimal jobs that were part-time or in a field that didn't interest them.

Zahab's experience highlights the problem of programs that are supposed to help people but that are nearly impossible to access. One federal income-driven repayment program bases monthly costs on a borrower's income and forgives debt after 20 years of payments. But just 32 of the roughly 2 million people who might have been able to qualify for the program had their loans forgiven, according to a recent report from the Student Borrower Protection Center and the NCLC. Part of the problem is that the private companies servicing loans steered borrowers away from such programs, according to multiple lawsuits. The government also allows people who believe they have been defrauded by private for-profit colleges to apply to have their loans forgiven. On March 18, the Department of Education said it was streamlining that process for 72,000 such borrowers who were denied full relief during the Trump Administration.

Zahab was finally able to enroll in an income-based repayment program in February, lowering her monthly payments from \$934 to \$53. She'll have to make payments for two decades before her remaining debt is forgiven.

Heaps says her experience was similarly infuriating. Over the years, she spent hours on the phone with different servicers as her loan was transferred from one company to another; they often gave her incorrect information, she says. At times, she didn't think she'd succeed, and in fact her application was denied in October 2019. A manager at the loan servicer told Heaps that the Education Secretary at the time, Betsy DeVos, would have to sign off on her forgiveness application personally.

The hassle made her more determined than ever. "I was like, 'I am going to outplay you; you are not going to get me to go away,'" Heaps tells me.

THE EXPERIENCES of Zahab and Heaps underscore why blanket forgiveness can seem appealing. Rather than force

individuals to jump through countless hoops, why not just wipe out a portion of everyone's loans, as Warren and Schumer proposed? But that may not be equitable, because those who have the highest level of debt forgiven tend to be those with advanced degrees, who are earning high incomes. A better idea, advocates say, would be to make it simpler for everyone to access income-based forgiveness programs. One such program, Revised Pay as You Earn, or REPAYE, lets borrowers pay 10% of their discretionary income; after 25 years of payments, or 20 years for people who took out loans for undergraduate study, the remaining debt is wiped out.

A number of lawsuits are attempting to make it easier for borrowers to learn about and access those forgiveness programs. A February settlement between Massachusetts attorney general Maura Healey and the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency (PHEAA), which does business as FedLoan Servicing, requires PHEAA to restore borrowers' progress towards loan forgiveness if errors caused them to get off track. After a class-action lawsuit filed by members of the American Federation of Teachers, the loan servicer Navient agreed in October to help steer more borrowers toward loan-forgiveness opportunities.

There might be a way to cut servicers out of the process entirely, says Matthew Chingos, who runs the Center on Education Data and Policy at the Urban Institute. This would eliminate the conflict of interest inherent in having private loan companies, which are tasked with collecting payments, being trusted to advise people who want to escape those loans. Instead, payments could be taken out of debt holders' paychecks, the way taxes are, with the IRS's share rising or falling according to an individual's income. "We want to get into a system where people who are really struggling and are in an economic crisis don't have to worry about it," Chingos says. "Kind of like [the government] has been doing, saying, 'This is a crazy time, you don't have to pay your student loans.' But in a more targeted way, forever."

Of course, income-based repayment programs don't fix the system that got so many people so deep into debt in the first place. But until the wages that come after an education can match the cost of loans, forgiveness is one way to ensure that Americans trapped in student-loan debt and prevented from buying homes, saving for retirement and starting businesses will be able to join the economy.

Both Zahab and Heaps started with law degrees and mountains of debt; because of twists of fate, Zahab's debt has grown while Heaps' has disappeared. If Zahab hadn't been laid off from her public-service job, she might also be debt-free instead of facing down decades of payments. As Heaps would tell her, getting debt wiped out is life-changing. "It opened the possibilities of different things I could spend my money on," says Heaps, who no longer has a negative net worth. "I feel like my financial life has finally begun." —*With reporting by ALEJANDRO DE LA GARZA* □

**“I DIDN'T GET
MARRIED BECAUSE
I DIDN'T WANT TO
HAVE ANYBODY
SADDLED WITH
MY DEBT.”**
Sharie Zahab

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VIEWPOINT

PANIC MODE

The pandemic exacerbated wealthy families' fears that their kids won't get into top colleges

BY NICOLE LAPORTE

TWO YEARS AGO, WHEN THE college-admissions scandal dubbed Operation Varsity Blues crashed into headlines, it immediately became a showcase of white privilege.

Images of *Full House* actor Lori Loughlin and Gordon Caplan, the former co-chairman of the white-shoe law firm Willkie Farr & Gallagher—making the perp walk to the Boston courthouse where they and nearly 40 other parents were charged with paying an independent counselor named Rick Singer vast sums of money in order to get their children into colleges such as Yale and Georgetown—epitomized the gross inequities of the American class system: rich white people, yet again, were paying to play. It's a theme that has played out again and again in American culture—and has only been exacerbated by the pandemic.

Underlying the parents' nonchalance, there was something more powerful, and more pervasive, lurking among white parents of enormous means: a deep-seated fear that they are no longer winning at the game of college admissions.

As I spoke with dozens of parents of children in elite, private high schools in order to better understand their mindset, they complained about how it had become harder than ever to get into selective schools.

These trends affect all college applicants, regardless of socioeconomic background. But affluent parents, even those whose kids had the hook of being a legacy or a recruitable athlete, felt things were further stacked against them because of a shift in the culture that had led universities to focus on

building freshman classes that reflect the world we live in. Diversity had evolved slowly from a buzzword into an institutional priority.

This fear of falling out of a secure bubble, one that dates back to the days when colleges were specifically built for white, Protestant males, has only intensified since the scandal broke. Black Lives Matter and other social upheavals of the past year have driven colleges' desire to attract a more diverse population. For instance, UCLA and the



Actor Loughlin, front, and husband, back right, arrive at a hearing for their case

University of California, Berkeley, saw historic gains in Black and Latino applications this past fall—the former rose by 48% at both campuses, the latter by 33% and 36% respectively.

AFFLUENT WHITE PARENTS are largely self-aware about their woe-is-me railing against what they ultimately feel is a form of reverse discrimination. And the facts dispute their agita: more than two-thirds of the Ivy League still comes from the top 20% of the income scale. In L.A., where Singer found

his most receptive audience, these parents are overwhelmingly liberal Democrats who proudly advertise their social-justice beliefs. They outwardly applaud schools' efforts to admit more diverse student bodies, believing this is for the greater good of the campuses and society overall. They are in tune with the social trend—until, all of a sudden, they realize it might affect their own child's chances of getting into college.

This year's college-admissions season has been like no other. Colleges' decision to make the SAT and ACT optional after many standardized-testing sites shut down meant that applications rose dramatically. Suddenly the kid who'd always thought Yale was a reach because of a meh verbal score on the SAT dashed off an application. The pandemic also

led to deferred enrollments from the fall of 2020, meaning that those kids were pushed into this coming fall's freshman class, taking slots from the graduates just coming in.

However you slice it, the sense is that the rules are being rewritten and that there is no longer a surefire way for the wealthiest to pave the way toward a gilded acceptance letter from a top college. The usual methods—hiring tutors; sending kids off to Costa Rica to build houses and “character”; or just making sure kids stay on top of their workload—simply aren't enough anymore.

This panic at the heart of the Varsity Blues scandal is even more acute in 2021, showing how the practices and obsessions have only been exacerbated, even as news about the case has died down. But unless there are real changes in what universities ask of students and how many of them they let in, the frantic desperation is here to stay.

LaPorte is the author of Guilty Admissions: The Bribes, Favors, and Phonies Behind the College Cheating Scandal

Society

PINTEREST PAID

ITS MOST SENIOR

WOMAN \$22.5M

FOR GENDER

DISCRIMINATION.

THERE'S A LOT

MORE TO THE STORY

*She and two other former employees
went from roiling the “nicest” social
media platform to fighting the racism and
sexism of Silicon Valley*

BY JANICE MIN

THE DAY FRANÇOISE BROUGHER WAS FIRED FROM Pinterest began like so many of her workdays. It was April 2, 2020, and the company’s chief operating officer—with her rescue dog Dogbert nearby—was a few weeks into the pandemic and remote work, managing her team of 750 from her home in Silicon Valley. The gentlest social media site, built for “pinning” visual inspiration to virtual boards, appeared to be in equilibrium.

Brougher wasn’t giving much thought to the recent brief but irritating meetings and calls she had had with Todd Morgenfeld, the company’s chief financial officer. On a recent Friday, she had texted their mutual boss, Ben Silbermann, the CEO and co-founder of Pinterest, about what she describes as a particularly dismissive interaction she had with Morgenfeld where he had hung up on her. On Monday, Silbermann suggested Brougher talk to human resources to smooth over the conflict. It was the first time in Brougher’s 30-year career she had gone to HR about her own issue.

Now, a few weeks later, Jo Dennis, Pinterest’s chief human-resources officer, was on the line. “She said, ‘I want to prepare you for your call with Ben tomorrow,’” recalls Brougher, who had a standing one-on-one scheduled with her boss. “‘Your job is going to change.’”

“I said, ‘Oh, interesting, can you tell me more?’ She said, ‘No, I cannot,’” says Brougher. “And I said, ‘O.K., don’t waste my time. Put Ben on the call.’” Silbermann and Brougher exchanged brief pleasantries. Then he fired his second-in-command over video chat. “I never saw it coming,” she says. “I was like the intern, fired in a 10-minute call.”

And thus the French-born engineer, 55, would begin a journey far from her decades of anonymity as a Harvard Business School graduate and respected senior executive at Google and Square, suing a company with a market cap today of \$43 billion for gender discrimination—the most senior Silicon Valley executive ever to do so. Now, in her first major interview since her lawsuit settled, Brougher says flatly of her last day at Pinterest, “No, we didn’t have a giant going-away party.”

That month, Ifeoma Ozoma was waging her own battle

at Pinterest. The daughter of Nigerian immigrants, Ozoma, a Yale graduate who joined Pinterest from Facebook, had been new to the company's burgeoning public-policy and social-impact department. Wonky and raised in Anchorage, she was behind widely praised Pinterest initiatives that blocked searches for antivaccination posts and stopped promotion of plantation weddings. She also had concluded that she and another experienced woman on her team, Aerica Shimizu Banks, who is Black and Japanese American, were being paid less than what their job descriptions indicated per Pinterest guidelines. Ozoma's salary disparity—about \$64,000 annually—was significant but not as meaningful as the stock grant given every employee based on position, and hers appeared to be 33,675 shares short of what her job description merited. Post-IPO, she says, the shares could have amounted to a value close to \$2.5 million over a four-year period of vesting.

After human resources refused to increase their compensation, they involved a lawyer. The friction, Ozoma believed, caused her white male manager to snipe with statements like "Why does everything have to be about race?" Later, Ozoma's cell-phone number and internal company emails appeared on extremist platforms including 4chan and 8chan following leaks by a white male colleague, a software developer, to Project Veritas, the far-right activist group founded by James O'Keefe. She received threats of rape and death. She kept a gun. She moved. And then she and Banks, whose allegations of mistreatment were dismissed by the company after repeated internal investigations, negotiated their departures in May.

When, on June 2, in the wake of George Floyd's death, the company posted an earnest Black Lives Matter message on its corporate website and social channels, Ozoma reached her breaking point. "Are you f-cking kidding me?" she thought. Days later, she and Banks, 33, would go public with their stories, violating nondisclosure agreements (NDAs) attached to their severance packages. "I lost my mother in college," says Ozoma, 28. "I can't think of a single thing I've been afraid of since then, because the worst thing that could happen to me already did."

Over the next months, Pinterest's warm, fuzzy veneer would unravel like one of the platform's chunky knitted sweaters. An employee walkout to show solidarity with Ozoma, Banks and Brougher followed; Pinterest hired law firm WilmerHale to conduct an investigation of workplace culture; a shareholder lawsuit alleged mishandling around issues of discrimination; and a record \$22.5 million settlement was paid to Brougher—the largest known settlement for gender discrimination in U.S. history—with \$2.5 million of that jointly committed to nonprofits that support underrepresented groups in tech.

Now, nearly a year after their departures,

Brougher and the two colleagues she had never met while at Pinterest stand among the most significant figures in a reckoning not just at Pinterest but in the long exclusionary saga of Silicon Valley, where 5% of tech leaders are women, far fewer are Black or Latinx, and only 2% of venture-capital money goes to female founders. Their stories fit an unnerving pattern in an industry once optimistic about changing the world, that instead has fallen behind even legacy industries in diversity and inclusion. This even as study after study, in particular a 2015 McKinsey report, reveals how diverse teams perform better financially. Pinterest, Google, Oracle, MailChimp and Facebook are among the behemoths that publicly champion women and diversity through initiatives and hashtags—even as their own employees come forward with allegations of discrimination and pay disparity. Ozoma calls much of Silicon Valley's talk performative or, as she puts it, "diversity theater."

San Francisco attorney David Lowe represented Brougher and has argued dozens of gender-discrimination cases. His firm handled Ellen Pao's landmark gender-discrimination case. He calls the stories of professional women "startlingly similar." "Often the critiques are, like what Françoise heard, 'You are not collaborative, not good with working with others. Too assertive,'" he says. Being a person of color adds another layer of potential bias and pain, particularly, as in the case of Ozoma and Banks, when a company's external messaging is at odds with its internal culture or stated company values.

"As you go higher, the number of women and people of color thin out," says Lowe. "When you get to the apex, there are hardly any. It's not because they lose talent or interest. In fact they are gaining talent. The only plausible explanation is that stereotypes and subtle forms of bias seep in. It's like climbing a ladder and then getting knocked down, rung by rung."

Amid all the big talk and little action, the three women are now taking extraordinary steps to help fix things themselves. Brougher says the first two organizations that have received money from her settlement are /dev/color, which supports a professional network of Black engineers, and Last Mile Education Fund, which offers financial support for low-income students to bring them to graduation and into tech. After attorney's fees and taxes, Brougher and her husband Bill additionally have set aside half of her remaining settlement for groups with similar missions through a donor-advised fund. From the other half, they paid off their mortgage and gave directly to other causes, including medical research. "Some donations will be public, some not," says Brougher, whose parents never graduated from college. "I'm trying to do good with what I got."

Meanwhile, Ozoma and Banks are flexing their public-policy skills. A California senate committee

FRANÇOISE BROUGHER



*‘The line was crossed
when a description of my
PERFORMANCE was
reduced to my **GENDER.**’*

will hear arguments in April for legislation abolishing employer NDAs around racial discrimination that they and their attorney helped draft. Ozoma raised \$108,000 to support the cause and, along with state senator Connie Leyva, Earthseed—her own consulting firm—will act as the bill’s co-sponsor. Ozoma will offer main testimony on behalf of the bill; their lawyer, Peter Rukin, will be the second person to testify in favor, on behalf of the California Employment Lawyers Association. Banks’ powerful letter of support also has been submitted to Leyva, in which she condemns how NDAs leave victims to “suffer in silence.”

IN THE PAST DECADE, social media has been used to share often devastating stories using #MeToo, #BlackLivesMatter or more recently #StopAsian-Hate. Those who post often are met with even more abuse, threats of violence and graphic memes. Consequences for harassment are rare. The consistent message sent to the outspoken: Shut up. Or else.

Pinterest was considered different. A sort of Internet Xanax, since its 2010 launch, it has been a haven for the women who make up 70% of its users and tilt toward the crafty and domestic. The perils of other social media—the trolling, the culture wars—are largely absent. The top-performing content is about food and drink; after that, home decor. With his benign platform and mild-mannered image, Silbermann, a 38-year-old Iowan, wasn’t a swaggering mononym à la Bezos and Zuck, and certainly wasn’t subject to congressional tongue-lashings or consumer finger wags. President Trump—presumably not a baker or scrapbooker—never became one of the 459 million users of Pinterest, instead communicating on Twitter, Facebook, Snapchat and Instagram.

It was the potential of that special culture that attracted Brougher and Ozoma to Pinterest a few months apart in 2018; Banks joined in 2019. “Like everyone else, I thought Ben was very reserved and thoughtful,” says Brougher. “I was excited.” Another selling point was Pinterest’s upcoming IPO. “Every Big Tech employee’s dream is to work pre-IPO at a company,” says Ozoma. “This wasn’t some no-name startup. This was a company that people love.”

Brougher and Ozoma each would survive Pinterest for only 23 months. Banks, drawn by the opportunity to lead Pinterest’s Washington, D.C., office, just 12.

At Google, Brougher had run “an unsexy part of [ad] sales,” recalls former Google CFO Patrick Pichette, now Twitter’s board chair. But Brougher became a star, driving revenue for small and medium-size business to 23% year-over-year growth near the end of her tenure, delivering an annual \$16 billion in sales. “She would say, ‘Here’s my return. Here it is by cohort; here it is by month. And here’s what I’ve given you for the last quarter, and what I’m going to

do next quarter. And that's why you should allow me to hire another 46 people,'" says Pichette, laughing. "Resistance was futile ... but she also takes the time to listen. Fairness matters to her."

In 2013, Brougher joined Square, reporting to CEO Jack Dorsey as business lead for the payment-platform startup. Like Google, Square had a similar Silicon Valley culture of candor; Brougher recalls the environment as "incredibly egalitarian." "One of the things we've both always agreed on is you come to work to be respected, not to be liked," says Nextdoor CEO Sarah Friar, Brougher's colleague as Square's CFO. "I actually didn't think about my gender a lot. I worked on Wall Street for 11 years, and believe me, I thought about my gender." They were both part of the team that brought Square to its 2015 IPO. Today it's worth roughly \$100 billion.

BROUGHER BECAME PINTEREST'S first chief operating officer and its most senior woman. Pinterest's sluggish \$500 million in annual ad sales needed goosing before the April 2019 IPO. Brougher was given half the company, including global ad sales and marketing.

Immediately, she noticed something amiss in the San Francisco headquarters: The culture was secretive. Turnover was high. Decisions were made between Silbermann and a small circle—all men—in private sidebars, causing organizational chaos. Recalls Banks: "The entire structure was built on being friends with the CEO." Soon, Brougher, who calls herself "excessively transparent," wasn't being invited to certain meetings. "I asked why once, twice, and there was always an excuse. And then I'm trying at the next meeting to really contribute to the team, thinking, Maybe they will invite me to the next one."

A CNBC story in 2019 detailed the dysfunction. The story ran with the headline "The nicest company in Silicon Valley: How Pinterest's friendly culture has slowed decisions and hurt growth." The writer argued that Pinterest's avoidant culture was diametrically opposed to confrontational styles at an Amazon or Netflix, citing missed revenue targets set by investor Andreessen Horowitz. One former employee, who claimed to have been fired for insubordination after criticizing a strategy by one of Silbermann's staff, told CNBC there was an extremely passive-aggressive climate. Or as Brougher would later say, "Saying what you really thought was still dangerous at Pinterest."

In response to request for comment on this story, Pinterest declined to make any executives available, but answered some specific questions and issued a statement detailing its commitment to diversity and inclusion and steps it has taken to improve internal culture.

For the first time in her career, maybe her life, Brougher felt self-conscious. "You speak up and

have the feeling people are not focused on what you said," she says. "A lot has been written about 'othering,' that you could be viewed as a female or Black first, not as your job." In his court filing for Brougher, attorney Lowe cited a 2014 study by Kieran Snyder of tech-industry performance reviews that revealed an "abrasiveness trap" for women, where women are given feedback to be nicer and speak less. The study says "negative personality criticism—Watch your tone! Step back! Stop being so judgmental!"—showed up in 2.2% of reviews of men but 76% of women, even in reviews by women.

"Having a seat at the table matters, but [also] having a voice at the table matters," says Brougher. "I didn't think [Silbermann] was happy when I had a different opinion. I think when it came from a woman, it was much harder to accept." Adds Lowe: "So many features of Silicon Valley culture—to be disruptive, challenge the status quo, push back on authority—reward men who show up like that, but are negatives in reviews of women."

Ozoma eventually would find this to be true. She interned two summers at Google before starting in its massive public-policy and government-affairs department in 2015. Three years later, she left for Facebook, where she contributed to anti-hate-speech initiatives and community standards. There she grew comfortable challenging leadership. "There were meetings where Mark [Zuckerberg] would address the whole company," she says. "After Charlottesville, he said nothing about the [white supremacists] who had organized on the platform. During the Q&A, I asked, 'Why haven't you said anything to employees about Nazis marching in the street?'" Zuckerberg commended her bravery in asking the question, and the audience applauded. He admitted he should have spoken up sooner. Ozoma then questioned Sheryl Sandberg about the difficulty in reporting hate speech in the Messenger app; Sandberg said she would escalate a product fix to make it easier. But Ozoma says people looked shocked when Sandberg appeared to deflect Facebook's blame, discussing how much Zuckerberg donated to support social-justice causes. She saved the email the head of diversity and inclusion, also a Black woman, sent her after. "When you asked the question of Mark ... there was so much energy in the exchange. I'd love to get a solid understanding from you about what you are feeling and expressing." Still, there was no retaliation. "Facebook is direct," says former head of content at Facebook Janett Riebe, who would later be a colleague at Pinterest as its safety-policy manager. "Radical candor would be a euphemism to describe it."

In July 2018, Ozoma became the second employee at Pinterest in public policy and social impact, a new department amid growing calls for tech accountability. (Ten months into her job, in May 2019, she helped

recruit Banks, a seasoned veteran from Google and of the Obama Administration, with a master's from Oxford.) Ozoma believes from her first meeting she ran afoul of leadership when she questioned the company's decision to keep InfoWars' Alex Jones on the platform. "The entire strategy was, 'Lay low. Don't weigh in on anything,'" says Ozoma. "And I was like, 'This is not controversial.' This is someone who is harassing the parents of Sandy Hook." Shortly after an inquiry from the tech news site Mashable in August 2018, Mashable reported that Pinterest had removed InfoWars from the platform.

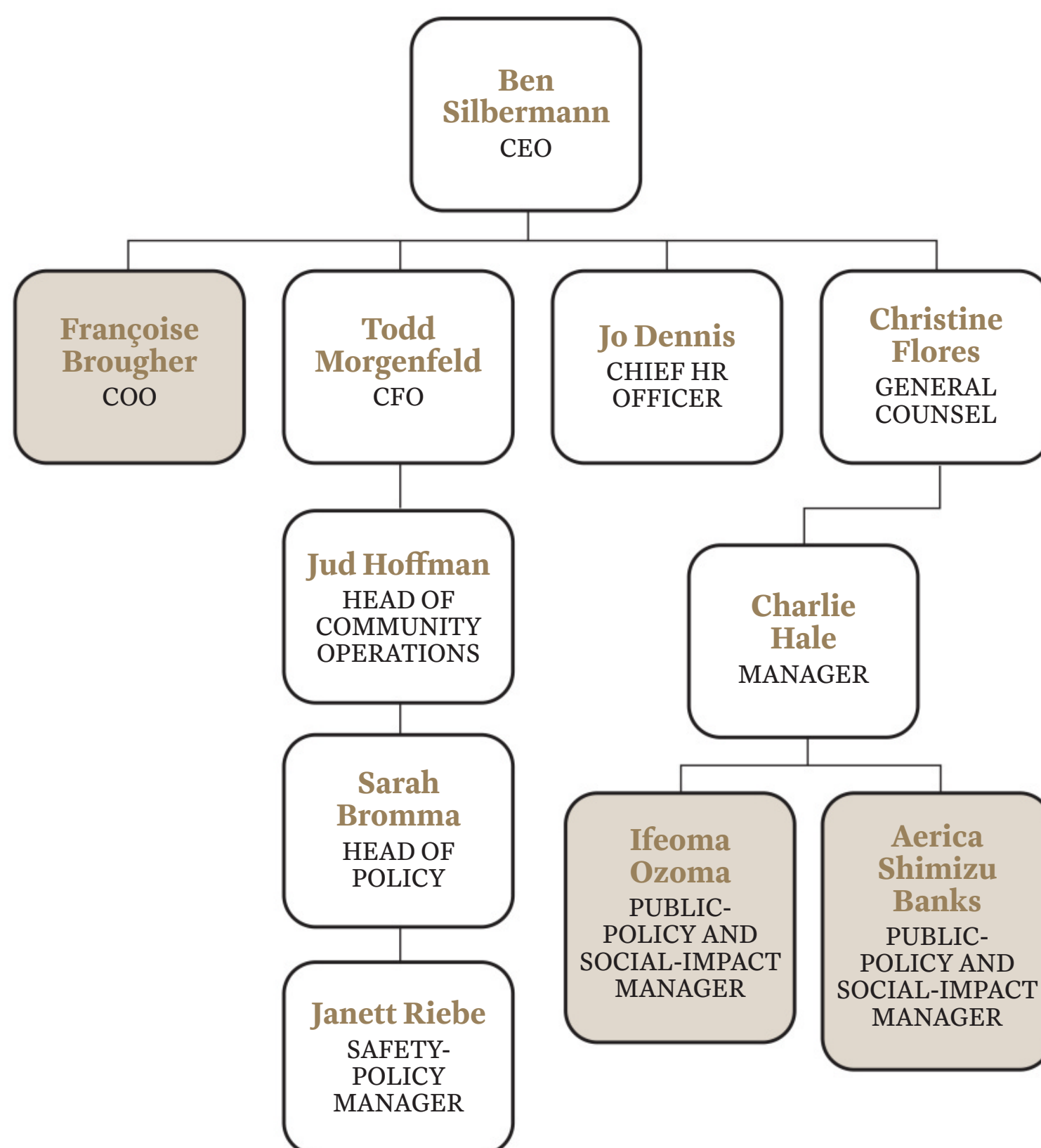
OZOMA, LIKE BROUGHER, kept pushing for change at Pinterest, developing relationships with the World Health Organization and the CDC to manage health misinformation. She also pushed to stop promotion of plantation weddings. "The not-nice way of saying it is, I am a sh-t starter," she says. "It was, 'How do we differentiate ourselves not only having the product but also values and matching the two?'" Her six-month performance review, delivered by her manager Charlie Hale, said she "always exceeded expectations." Ozoma even received a gift from the company acknowledging her "leadership"; the email informing her read, "Look at you, Rising Star!"

But Ozoma, Banks and Brougher separately had unearthed issues with their compensation. (A 2017 study found Black women in tech were paid 21% less than white men for comparable jobs; all women 16% less.) Ozoma was representing Pinterest in media and before members of Congress and the U.K. Parliament. Upon seeing the company's hierarchy of "levels"—an organizational practice used in companies to assign pay—she believed her job description would have put her at a Level 6 instead of Level 4. The company argued she didn't have enough experience to advance levels, though the documentation didn't specify years of experience as a requirement. When Banks found her own leveling at 5 instead of 6, she joined Ozoma in enlisting attorney Rukin. "[My lawyer] was like, 'I've never had a prospective client this organized with this much documentation,'" says Ozoma. "He told me, 'I don't anticipate needing to work more than 10 hours on this.'" Ten months later, with matters still unresolved, he filed complaints for both clients with the California Department of Fair Employment and Housing (DFEH). (A Pinterest spokesperson says the company looked thoroughly into Ozoma's and Banks' concerns about whether they were properly leveled, and determined that their pay and level were appropriate. Both DFEH complaints were ultimately settled in mediation.)

Meanwhile, Pinterest's public-policy work kept gaining applause. Banks created a partnership with the U.S. Census Bureau; Ozoma was quoted on the front page of the *Wall Street Journal*. "The day that I was on an interview with [NPR's] Audie Cornish, I

POWER STRUCTURE

A snapshot of Pinterest's organizational chart in February 2020



was exchanging emails with my lawyer," says Ozoma. "I wasn't threatening. They knew that I was so loyal." But, she says, Hale took a turn. In one performance review, he acknowledged her work in deprioritizing slave-plantation content, but said she should have provided "the pros" of promoting slave plantations. She says he would also verbally remark on her "tone" (as Banks said he would later do with her). After her personal information was leaked online by a male colleague, Ozoma says, even though she texted Silberman screenshots of the threats she was receiving, the company did not help her have the content taken down, and she relied on friends from other tech companies. Riebe says the winds were shifting. "Once she persisted [about pay], it got nasty," says Riebe. "She was starting to be kept out of loops. She had a fantastic reputation, and then [there was] a slow morphing into, 'You are too much.'"

Banks was feeling gaslit even before she officially started. Hale told her Pinterest wouldn't publish a press release announcing her, a customary gesture by tech companies to inform Congress and lobbyists

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of a new point person. She says a recruiter also asked in a phone call that she not share details of her offer. (Since 2015, it has been illegal for California employers to ask workers to keep compensation confidential.) It all gave her a funny feeling. But Banks already had resigned from Google and felt stuck. In her first month, she alerted the general counsel and other senior members of the team about the risk of employee information leaking from a potential attack from Project Veritas. The group claimed to be holding information from Pinterest. Banks says she was brushed off and told not to reply to the email chain again. The information dump ended up including the personal details about Ozoma shared on 8chan and 4chan.

In September 2019, Banks says, Hale scolded her for not looping him in before Silberman signed a “CEOs for Gun Safety” open letter to the U.S. Senate that earned wide praise. (Pinterest disputes that account.) Soon after, Hale, Ozoma and Banks would recommend reversing a new Pinterest decision made by senior leadership to eliminate holiday pay for the lowest-paid contractors in food services, sanitation and security, many people of color and some disabled. An internal email suggests that the PR department grew concerned after an employee heard two of the workers bemoaning the cutbacks. Banks, whose mother was a low-wage housekeeper, was tasked with drafting the proposal; she consulted with two of the company’s outside lobbying firms. She sent the proposal to general counsel Christine Flores; a long, painful chain of emails followed where Banks was accused of being unprofessional and not following process. “She told me it wasn’t my place to interfere in business decisions,” recalls Banks. Flores told her that the decision was being reversed, but that she had nothing to do with it. Flores later initiated an investigation, claiming Banks lied about buy-in from the lobbying firms. (A Pinterest spokesperson says the company disagrees with this characterization of their exchange.) Banks says one of the firms, Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck, denied their formal involvement to Flores. Banks, however, kept notes from their meeting, and emails, reviewed by TIME, where Brownstein execs congratulated her on the decision reversal. She and attorney Rukin never learned the outcome of the investigation. In her next review, Hale said a goal should be to “build her credibility.” She continued to represent the company before the Department of Justice and members of Congress. She went on antidepressants for the first time in her life.

Eventually, Rukin would represent both women in their confidential negotiations to separate from the company. Banks was replaced by a white man.

That same year, a routine filing for Pinterest’s IPO disclosed, among other information, compensation of the highest-paid executives, and Brougner learned

AERICA SHIMIZU BANKS



*‘Racism and sexism are
INTERTWINED. [It’s
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of her own inequity. Brougher says she had been told that all executives had the same vesting schedule for their stock grants: 10% the first year, escalating to 40% in the fourth. She saw she was the only executive in leadership whose equity vested that slowly. In her first year, she vested 37% of what her closest peer, CFO Morgenfeld, had. She went to Silbermann; HR adjusted the grant. But that seemed to make things worse. She says she was disinvited from board meetings. When 2019's Q3 revenue targets were missed, she discovered engineering and product issues that contributed to ad-serving problems. After raising the issue, she says she was disinvited from product meetings, which Silbermann oversaw. In her next review, she was told she was "not collaborative."

Morgenfeld gave Brougher a peer evaluation in January 2020 (she was not asked to give one to him). Prompted to provide written remarks about her positive qualities, he came up with just one line: She "seems to be a champion for diversity issues." "It was very hurtful," says Brougher. "I'm keen to be recognized for my merit vs. my gender." Indeed, Brougher rarely wore her gender on her sleeve. The Information editor in chief Jessica Lessin recalls once proposing a story to Brougher when she was at Square about Dorsey's female lieutenants. Brougher, recalls Lessin, said to her, "There is no upside; there are so few of us."

On Silbermann's advice, Brougher called Morgenfeld to clear the air; she says he called her a liar about her description to Silbermann of their previous conversation, and hung up on her. Silbermann shrugged, and according to her legal complaint, told her they were like "an old couple fighting over who would make coffee." Brougher was aghast. After that, Morgenfeld stopped speaking to her entirely. Brougher wrote Dennis one last time for help. She never answered. A week later, Brougher was fired, offered the standard severance from her employee agreement, asked to sign an NDA and to sign off on an announcement that she had "resigned." She refused. "I said, 'You just let me go. Please write whatever you want. But write the truth because you are accountable for the truth.'" She called friends including Pichette. "She was angry in the way she can be where she stays calm. Laser guided," he says. "She knew she was done wrong."

ON JUNE 2, Pinterest, like other companies, posted Black Lives Matter messaging after George Floyd was killed. "With everything we do, we will make it clear that our Black employees matter," wrote Silbermann on the company website. Incredulous, Ozoma and Banks, 13 days later, laid bare details from their Pinterest tenures on Twitter. They went viral. Lady Gaga posted the news on Instagram. The *Washington Post*, *Fast Company* and NPR jumped on the story. Insider talked to nine more Pinterest employees with similar

stories about abusive behavior, lower pay, and medical and psychiatric problems said to have arisen from company toxicity. "People were crying every single day," one employee told Insider.

It was the first time Brougher learned about what had happened to Ozoma and Banks.

Brougher had been working with her attorney, Lowe, on a settlement. When Lowe's firm had represented Pao in her 2012 trial against venture-capital firm Kleiner Perkins, it had been the highest-profile case alleging gender discrimination in Silicon Valley. During the trial, in something media deemed the "Pao effect," women at Twitter, Facebook and Microsoft would also sue for gender discrimination, inspired by her actions. "Ellen's case broke ground not just for Françoise but for others," says Lowe. Pao was offered a settlement but declined because of its requisite NDA. She lost her jury trial. The opposing counsel at the time, attorney Melinda Reichert (who would also serve as opposing counsel for Pinterest against Ozoma, Banks and Brougher), gave a 2015 interview to Bloomberg Law, where she discredited gender discrimination as a reality: "I just find that kind of hard to believe because I look at women who are successful—like Sheryl Sandberg. She says that women have to do things differently than men do to succeed. If you're constantly thinking that you're being treated differently, it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy."

Lowe tried bringing Pinterest to the table for a financial settlement for nearly five months. He was ready to file suit, but Brougher wanted to write a blog post in her own words as well. Uber engineer Susan Fowler had done so a few years ago, triggering a chain of events that led to CEO Travis Kalanick's ouster. "I wanted to explain that there is a buildup to [these things], the culture allows behavior," Brougher says. "The line was crossed when a description of my performance was reduced to my gender. When I complained about the discrimination and was fired four weeks later—that was retaliation."

On Aug. 11, *Françoise Brougher v. Pinterest, Inc.* was filed in California superior court. And Brougher—after a family meeting with Bill and their three kids—posted an essay on Medium under the headline "The Pinterest Paradox: Cupcakes and Toxicity," detailing in clean, spare language her experience at the company.

Like the tweets earlier, her story caught fire. Jack Dorsey retweeted the story; Susan Wojcicki, CEO of YouTube, tweeted, "This story from @FrancoiseBr is important showing discrimination against women in the workplace. Françoise is one of the best execs I've worked with so it can happen to anyone." Three days later, Pinterest employees staged their walkout. Says Ozoma: "It was a visceral reaction from employees at a company where employees don't have visceral reactions." The Verge summed up a view gaining traction:

“The nicest company in tech is looking pretty mean.”

Brougher reached out through mutual friends to meet Ozoma for the first time. Both have an understanding of the complicated intersection of their stories, one that ended with a privileged white woman, already a millionaire, receiving even more millions while the two less senior Black women did not. (Ozoma got six months of severance, lost her unvested stock and is paying COBRA for her insurance; Banks won’t disclose her settlement.) “I was so proud that my speaking up could lead to the second most powerful person at the company speaking up,” says Ozoma. But, “the way history has always worked is that Black women lead a movement and then get left out usually in the telling of it. Thankfully, the history had already been written.” Ozoma contacted reporters who didn’t acknowledge the intersectionality. “But at the end of the day, my issue has always been with Pinterest and will always be with Pinterest.”

Meanwhile, Pinterest spiraled. In September, the Verge reported that a Pinterest finance employee who reviewed payroll data and discovered that Black people at the company were paid less than white counterparts was reprimanded by HR. (Pinterest denied the employee was reprimanded, and said an investigation revealed that the employee’s comparators were wrong.) A few weeks before Brougher’s settlement announcement, an investor lawsuit was brought by the Employees’ Retirement System of Rhode Island, which oversees \$8.5 billion in assets. The suit claimed Pinterest executives and board members breached their fiduciary duty by failing to respond to allegations of workplace discrimination. The complaint alleged that the CEO “repeatedly placed himself before the Company, surrounding himself with yes-men and marginalizing women who dared to challenge Pinterest’s White, male leadership clique.”

That may have been a trigger for the company to finally act. An internal document reviewed by TIME laid out how the company’s chosen public response to a media crisis depends significantly on how severely senior leadership believes a story will impact the stock price.

On Dec. 14, Brougher and Pinterest announced their settlement—minus an NDA. The Information’s Lessin says a certain pragmatism may have been at work: “Companies are competing to be the best place to draw the best talent. It used to be jockeying for engineers with free food. Now they have to compete for culture.” Though the *Guardian* reported that Ozoma and Banks felt like the settlement was a “slap in the face,” Ozoma clarifies: “Not a slap in the face from Françoise. But a slap from Pinterest because ... What is the point of speaking up first and doing all this work, both physical and emotional labor, to then not even be credited prop-

erly?” Neither Ozoma nor Banks would receive additional money or hear from Pinterest again.

Pinterest declined to make any executives available for this story. But a spokesperson emailed this statement: “The leadership and employees at Pinterest are committed to a shared goal of building a company we can all be proud of. One that’s diverse, equitable and inclusive, where employees feel included and supported. Over the past year, we’ve made a number of changes to improve our company culture, including revamping our unconscious-bias training, more pay and level transparency, developing an employee-led change network, and working to improve representation in our workforce, especially for senior positions.”

BROUGHER HAS SPENT the past couple of months between her California home and her childhood hometown in France, hiking and spending time with her family after separately losing both her mother and her father in early 2021. She isn’t losing sleep over being marked as a troublemaker. (It’s a position she knows she’s privileged to be in; her 2019 compensation at Pinterest was \$21.7 million.) Asked whether Silicon Valley companies may be hesitant to hire Brougher in the future, Pichette says, “Not the good ones.” Ultimately, during her tenure annual revenue grew from about \$500 million to \$1.1 billion, and Pichette believes Brougher was largely responsible for much of Pinterest’s success today. But she’s keeping her options for the future open—whether C-suite or advocacy. Her contributions to /dev/color and the Last Mile Education Fund became the largest individual donation either organization had ever received, and she has created a spreadsheet to study more potential beneficiaries.

Meanwhile, Ozoma and Banks are spearheading a movement. In 2018, in response to the #MeToo movement, California had passed the STAND Act (Stand Together Against Nondisclosure Act), which banned NDAs in cases of sexual harassment, assault and discrimination. But when Ozoma and Banks violated their NDAs, they weren’t protected from talking about racial discrimination. “Racism and sexism are intertwined,” says Banks, who recalls the impossibility in determining from her experience, “Is this a racist or sexist thing that happened to me?” Through Rukin, Ozoma and Banks reached state senator Leyva, and they drafted the Silenced No More Act. The law would “empower survivors to speak out—if they so wish—so they can hold perpetrators accountable and hopefully prevent abusers from continuing to torment and abuse other workers,” Leyva said in a release. If it passes committee, it will go to the floor for a vote this summer. When asked if Pinterest supports the legislation, a Pinterest spokesperson deflects, emailing that employees, among other internal remedies, can call the company “hotline” to

IFEOMA OZOMA

*“The entire strategy was,
“Lay low. Don’t weigh in
on **ANYTHING.**” And
I was like, “This is not
CONTROVERSIAL.””*



report “inappropriate conduct.”

Both women have since launched their own companies: Ozoma started Earthseed, a consulting firm that advises on public policy and, yes, tech accountability; Banks launched Shiso, an advisory and consultant firm around issues of diversity, equity and inclusion in tech. They were gratified to see Pinterest add two Black women to its board. “Black women, whatever comp is being offered, take it,” Ozoma says, but “I wish they had gotten on the board without the stink of what happened at Pinterest.”

As for the ripple effect, “There is a head on a stake in the middle of the town now,” says Pichette. Referring to ousted Uber CEO Travis Kalanick, he says, “The Travises of the world, the VCs ... It’s now like, ‘Travis, you can’t do that.’ Those days are over.” He says boards and bosses now have something to point to. “People can say, ‘We’re not paying \$50 million’ because of [your bad behavior].” He believes the Valley’s real change will come from startups, where they have a shot at getting it right from the outset, arguing that the biggest companies are “freaking huge aircraft carriers with all the problems of discrimination and everything else, and 150,000 people ... once you’re up to 30,000 engineers and 20% are women, you will never get out of it.” Nextdoor’s Friar says, “It is definitely a flag to every company. It’s not just a cultural thing. There could be massive business ramifications.”

Problems are easier to identify than solutions, of course. Since the Pinterest implosion, several tremors have rocked Silicon Valley. Timnit Gebru, a co-leader of Google’s Ethical AI team and one of its best-known Black female employees, says she was fired after criticizing the company’s lack of progress in

hiring women and people of color, something that impacted biases built into AI technology like facial recognition. A white female AI researcher, Margaret Mitchell, was later fired as well. A colleague in AI tweeted that the company was running a “smear campaign” against the two women. And the U.S. Labor Department recently announced it was giving up on its class-action suit alleging that pay disparities at Oracle withheld \$400 million in pay to Black, Asian, Latinx and female workers.

In other words, broken culture remains as ubiquitous as cookies on a computer. “Clearly there’s something wrong with the numbers,” says Friar, “because there’s just no way half the population isn’t showing up in half of the slots.” Brougher says we will know we have equity “when we see mediocre women getting through the executive ranks, because I can tell you there are a ton of mediocre men.”

At Pinterest, the stock price recently hit its all-time high. *Forbes* says Silbermann today is personally worth \$4.1 billion. All the managers named in the women’s stories remain at Pinterest except for HR lead Jo Dennis. On Nov. 13, four weeks before Brougher’s settlement was announced, Dennis sent a note to the Pinterest staff saying that “after 24 years of nonstop work,” she had decided to spend more time with her family. Banks calls Dennis “the scapegoat.”

“The woman got the blame, as usual,” says Ozoma. “They should all be held accountable. But you know what? They can never run away from this, even when their kids look their names up online. This will always be tied to them. For that, I will forever be grateful to the Internet.” —*With reporting by MARIAH ESPADA, SIMMONE SHAH and JULIA ZORTHIAN* □

Profile **ALL THE STOPS**

After taking on New York City's crumbling subway system, Andy Byford is back home in the U.K. with an even a bigger mission: saving London's transit network from post-pandemic collapse—and convincing the world not to give up on public transport

BY CIARA NUGENT/LONDON

PHOTOGRAPHS BY CHRIS
DORLEY-BROWN FOR TIME





Profile

ANDY BYFORD WAS FEELING GUILTY.

It was March 2020, and he had just left his job as head of the New York City Transit Authority, after Governor Andrew Cuomo moved him off a massive revamp of the ailing subways. Stuck in his English hometown of Plymouth because of pandemic travel restrictions, he sat feeling “frustrated and impotent” as COVID-19 decimated ridership and revenues in public transit in New York and around the world. “Had I known the full horror of what was to emerge,” Byford, 55, says grimly, “I would have put my resignation on hold and stayed to see New York City transit through the crisis.” He even reached out to the chairman of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) and offered to come back, he says.

But Byford, one of the world’s most respected transport leaders, didn’t have to go back across the pond to find a transit system that needed his help. In June 2020, he took over as commissioner of Transport for London (TfL), the agency responsible for the city’s public transit. On a chilly mid-December afternoon, a 3 p.m. sunset already dulling the blue over the British capital’s skyline, Byford sits straight-backed in a glass-paneled meeting room at TfL’s headquarters and lays out the “sobering” state of the system. TfL’s sprawling network of underground or “tube” trains—the world’s oldest—lost 95% of its passengers in the first lockdown of spring 2020, and buses, boats and overground trains fared little better, hemorrhaging around £80 million (\$110 million) a week during the strictest periods of lockdown. As the city lurched in and out of restrictions, tube ridership never climbed above 35% of 2019 levels.

The pandemic has not only caused an immediate fall in ticket revenues for the world’s public transit networks—rail ridership in Barcelona, Moscow, Beijing and New York City at times plummeting 80%—in some cities it also has thrown into question the future of mass urban transportation. Like the sleek 11-story building where Byford was one of a handful of employees not working from home this winter, offices from San Francisco to Hong Kong sit mostly empty. Major companies contemplate a shift to remote work, and city residents consider moves out of the crowded, polluted urban centers that have made lockdowns more unpleasant. Fears of sharing confined spaces with strangers have fueled soaring demand for used cars in Mexico, India and Europe. A U.K. survey found attitudes toward public transit had been set back by two decades, with only 43% of drivers open to using their car less, even if public transport improves.

The implications reach beyond Byford’s industry. If people move from mass transit to cars, government targets on reducing emissions to fight climate change will move out of reach.



▲
Byford’s first job was as a station foreman for Transport for London; now he’s the commissioner

Low-income communities and essential workers will be stuck with poorly funded or bankrupt systems as the wealthy move in cars or stay home. Economies will slow as it becomes more difficult for workers, consumers and businesses to reach one another. “Transportation policy is climate policy, economic policy and equity policy,” says Janette Sadik-Khan, who served as commissioner of the New York City Department of Transportation under Mayor Michael Bloomberg. “Restoring transit to full strength and investing in its future has to be viewed with the same urgency as restoring water or power lines after a national natural disaster.”

Byford is trying to persuade the U.K. to do just that. His relentless chipperness and nerdy fascination with intervals between train arrivals belie his success as a shrewd political negotiator. Resisting



what he calls “the unsophisticated knee-jerk reaction” of service cuts, he has helped secure more than £3 billion in funding packages to keep TfL running. But he says ensuring cities have the transit systems they need in five years requires more than just stopgap crisis solutions. Byford is pushing for new innovations during the pandemic, an overhaul of TfL’s funding model and a longer-term multibillion-dollar government-support deal. “My message to our leaders is: Don’t see transit as part of the problem,” he says. “It’s part of the pathway out of the pandemic.” If he can set London on that path, he’ll give city leaders around the world a road map to follow.

AS A TEENAGER growing up in Plymouth, a coastal city home to the largest naval base in Western Europe, Byford had

thought he might join the navy. In the end, after leaving university, he brought his efficiency and leadership skills straight to TfL, working as a tube-station foreman. It was something of a family business: his father had worked there, and his grandfather had driven a bus for 40 years, including through the Blitz when German bombs pounded London in World War II. But he was mostly drawn, he says earnestly, by “the buzz of operations, never knowing what the next day will bring” and “a passion for customer service.”

Byford sees himself as “naturally gregarious.” That quality—exercised in regular trips around TfL’s network to meet Londoners—has powered him through a career in the often thankless task of being the face of city transit systems. After leaving TfL and working on England’s railways in the 2000s, he took over the trains in Sydney. He speaks cornily about fostering “team spirit” and his love of going for a pint with colleagues on a Friday, prepandemic. But he doesn’t suffer fools. While overhauling Toronto’s failing transport commission from 2012 to 2017, he fired the manager of a line-extension project that had dragged on too long and replaced the team himself. At the MTA, he became known for his hands-on attitude, earning the nickname Train Daddy among fans and on social media. Though Byford cut his time in New York short, leaving his “Fast Forward” plan to remake subway signaling, bus routes and station access in his successor’s hands, transit experts hailed him for putting a previously hopeless system on the right path. “Andy’s attitude and his messaging were great, certainly refreshing for our political atmosphere; it was almost more than we deserve,” Sadik-Khan says. “He really restored New Yorkers’ confidence in transit. And that’s a tough hill to climb.”

Byford’s tenure in London is off to a less glamorous start. He contrasts his arrival at TfL last summer with his first day in New York City in 2018, when he was swarmed by a crowd of reporters at Manhattan’s

Bowling Green station, excited to meet the Brit who had come to fix the subways. In pandemic London, there was no welcoming committee. “I just sort of wandered in and told reception who I was,” he says. A gigantic flag that he had commissioned for his MTA office, celebrating his hometown soccer team Plymouth Argyle, now hangs slightly cramped in a small side room at TfL.

But the scale of his task in London, overseeing 9,000 buses and 250 miles of underground tracks as well as overground rail, cycling, taxis, boats, roads, bridges and tunnels across London’s 600 sq. mi., dwarfs his previous jobs. He must also grapple with TfL’s unique vulnerability to falls in ridership, which on the underground last year reached its lowest level since the 19th century. The network relies on ticket revenue for 72% of its operating income, far higher than the 30%-to-50% norm in major Western transit systems. The rest of TfL’s cash flow comes mostly from road-compliance charges, such as a congestion charge on cars, commercial activities like renting out properties, city taxes and local government grants. Prepandemic, TfL hadn’t received U.K. government funding for operations since 2018, Byford points out proudly.

Some cities have responded to the loss of passengers with service cuts, including Paris, where authorities cut metro and train service by 10% on most lines this March. In New York, the MTA cut service on two lines by 20% last spring, but the agency has avoided the swing-

ing 40% to 50% service cuts it warned of in late 2020, thanks to federal relief funds. In London, TfL has maintained near normal service throughout the pandemic. Byford says he’s determined to resist “the siren voices that say we should mothball lines, defer maintenance, get rid of capacity in order to achieve a short-term

financial objective. Cutting service leads to just a downward spiral.”

That downward spiral is well documented in cities like Washington, D.C.,

‘My message to our leaders is: Don’t see transit as part of the problem. It’s part of the pathway out of the pandemic.’

ANDY BYFORD

Profile

where deferred maintenance and under-investment in the 2000s have led to long safety shutdowns. When service becomes more irregular, people who can afford the expense will increasingly drive, take cabs or stop traveling in the city altogether. Ridership continues to fall, so revenue falls, and service and maintenance are cut further. “You end up creating a kind of transit underclass of people who have no other option and are still dependent on a lower-quality offering,” says Yingling Fan, a professor of urban and regional planning at the University of Minnesota. “Mass transit only works if it has the mass.”

Keeping the “mass” right now requires support. Byford and Mayor Sadiq Khan negotiated bailouts of £1.6 billion in May and £1.8 billion in October. The deals had to overcome strained relationships between the mayor, who is part of the opposition Labour Party, and the right-wing Conservative government, which has pledged to prioritize other regions in the pandemic recovery. In exchange, Khan agreed to raise city taxes and make £160 million worth of cuts to TfL, mostly in the back office. Two long-term rail-expansion projects have been mothballed.

But Byford prevented two threatened cuts that he says epitomized the short-term thinking that kills public transit: first, planned signaling updates for the busy Piccadilly line that runs all the way from Heathrow Airport to Piccadilly Circus and beyond; second, the Elizabeth line. The largest rail project in Europe, it will connect eastern and western towns with Central London, adding a full 10% to the network’s capacity. Delayed from its original 2018 completion date, and with some £18 billion already spent, the line narrowly avoided being shelved in November after the U.K. government refused to provide a final £1.1 billion TfL asked for to complete the project. The city agreed to take £825 million as a loan and find a way to deliver the line with that. Byford

promises “no more slippage” on the new opening date of 2022.

Byford is now negotiating with the government on his demand for £3 billion to cover operating costs in 2021 and 2022, and a further £1.6 billion a year until 2030 to allow TfL to reduce its dependence on fares by growing other revenue streams, like its housing division, and make long-term improvements. He argues that TfL is an essential motor of the green recovery that Prime Minister Boris Johnson has promised. For example, Byford wants to “expedite” the electrification of London’s massive bus fleet, which might compel manufacturers to set up a production line.

Most urgently, the money is needed to keep the city that provides 23% of U.K. GDP moving. In New York, a study by the NYU Rudin Center found that steep MTA cuts would trigger an annual GDP loss of up to \$65 billion. “You can’t just turn public transport on at the drop of a hat,” Byford says, citing the need for continued maintenance and ongoing scaling up of capacity. “You’ve got to keep planning, you’ve got to keep asking: What will the city’s needs be in the future?”

The pandemic has made that question much harder to answer. London’s population is set to decline in 2021 for the first time in three decades, losing up to 300,000 of its 9 million people, according to a January report by accountancy firm PwC. It’s too soon to say if that’s the start of a long-term postpandemic trend. But

even if the population remains stable, a mass shift to home work, predicted by some, would have “enormous implications for the future of public transit use,” says Brian Taylor, director of the Institute of Transportation Studies at UCLA, “because transit’s ability to move a lot of people in the same direction at the same time is its [big advantage over] cars.”

And a long-term shift from transit to car use in densely packed cities would cause major headaches for city leaders. In New York City, where the number of

newly registered vehicles from August to October was 37% higher than in the same period in 2019 across four of the five boroughs, residents compare the fight for parking spaces to *The Hunger Games*.

Byford rejects the idea “that mass travel to offices is a thing of the past, or that Central London is going to become some sort of tourist attraction preserved in aspic.” In a “realistic” scenario, he expects TfL ridership to recover to 80% of 2019 levels in the medium term. That still adds up to around £1 billion a year in lost revenue, he says, meaning TfL will have to restructure to make savings and potentially redesign bus routes and some service frequency based on how people are using the city. “But there’s still a lot of things we can do, in public policy and in TfL, to convince people not to get back in their cars,” he says. “My job is to make public transport the irresistible option.”

THE CRISIS FACING public transit over the next few years poses a grim threat to cities, at least in the short term. But city leaders also see hope for the long term in the global reckoning with the status quo that the disruption of COVID-19 has triggered. Many are considering how to use the lessons of this time to positively reshape cities for the postpandemic era. And the loser is cars. From Berlin to Oakland, Calif., roads have been blocked to create miles of new cycle paths, sidewalks have been widened and new plazas created. The “renaissance of innovation” that has occurred over the past year will accelerate cities’ transition to a more sustainable, low-emissions way of life, says Sadiq-Khan, whose tenure in New York City was marked by the creation of hundreds of miles of bike lanes.

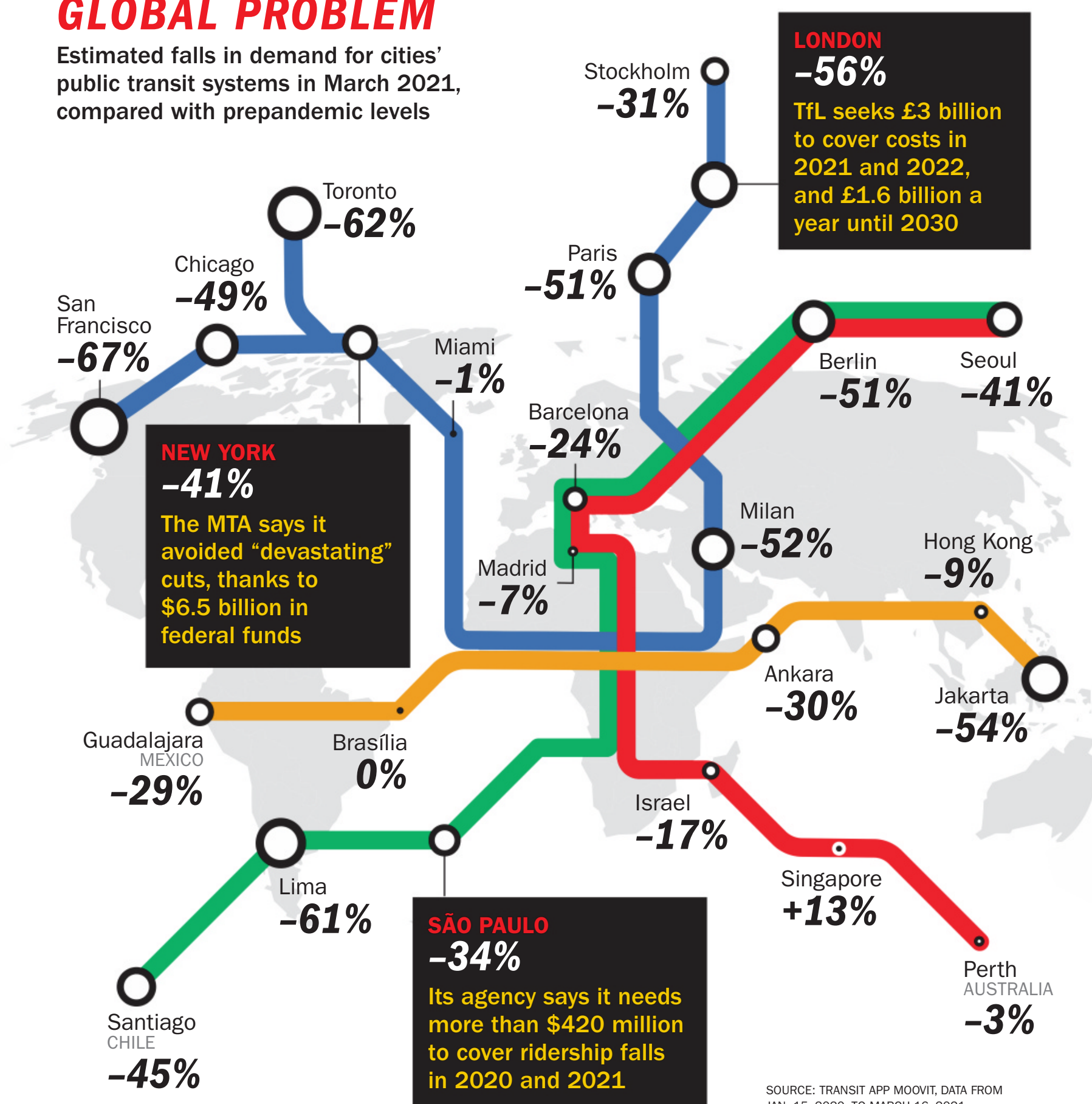
In London, as well as widened sidewalks and the creation of new low-traffic neighborhoods, Byford and Khan are making it increasingly expensive to drive in London. Since its introduction in 2003, the city’s congestion charge, a daily levy on cars driving in the city center, has helped cut congestion there by a quarter in three years, and, with support from both right- and left-wing local governments, it has become a model for cities wary of the political risk of upsetting drivers. In June, the city increased the daily charge to \$21, from \$16, and expanded its hours of operation, for now

‘This pause could give us an opportunity to reconsider how much curb space we devote to the storage of people’s private property, which cars are.’

BRIAN TAYLOR

GLOBAL PROBLEM

Estimated falls in demand for cities' public transit systems in March 2021, compared with prepandemic levels



on a temporary basis. In October, the "ultra-low emissions zone," which since 2019 has charged more polluting vehicles \$17 a day in Central London, will expand to cover a much larger area. And Mayor Khan is considering a new toll for drivers who come in from outside the city. For Byford, who has never owned a car, it's promising. "The mayor's goal has always been to increase the percentage of people using public transit, walking or cycling to 80% by 2041," he says. "Before, that was seen as ambitious. I think we can definitely do that now."

The postpandemic moment could potentially be a turning point. "Many are arguing this pause could give us an opportunity to reallocate street space, to reconsider how much curb space we devote to the storage of people's private property, which cars are," says Taylor. If cities manage to improve public transit and phase out

car use on their streets, in a few years they won't just have less pollution and lower greenhouse-gas emissions. Streets will be safer and more pleasant to walk through, increasing footfall for retail and hospitality sectors. Businesses will have more flexibility to set up stalls or outdoor seating. Curbs can be redesigned to be more accessible for the disabled. It all depends on the decisions city leaders take now to "intelligently manage automobiles" and protect public transit, Taylor says.

It may be hard to knock the car off its pedestal in the U.S. Many of its cities were designed around the automobile, and analysts say U.S. policymakers tend to treat public transit as part of the welfare system, rather than as an essential utility as it is considered in Europe and Asia. After the 2008 recession, U.S. transit agencies were forced to make cuts so deep that some had not recovered before the pandemic.

But transit leaders see some signs of the political support transit needs to survive and thrive. On Feb. 8, the U.S. Congress approved an additional \$30 billion for public transit agencies, softening the blow from the \$39 billion shortfall predicted by the American Public Transportation Association. And Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg, who spearheaded controversial initiatives to reduce car use as mayor of South Bend, Ind., told his Senate confirmation hearing that the current moment offers a "generational opportunity to transform and improve America's infrastructure."

Global transport is undergoing a transformation, despite the pressures of the pandemic. The market for low-emissions electric buses is thriving, with cities from Bogotá to Delhi ordering hundreds of units over the past year. Transit agencies, including TfL, are partnering with delivery companies to make the "last mile" of trips more efficient. Meanwhile, urban-planning concepts like the "15-Minute City," championed by Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo, are scaling back the need for long commutes and unnecessary journeys.

Fast Forward, Byford's attempt to transform New York City's transit, is "somewhat on hold at the moment," he says. But he urges his former colleagues not to allow the pandemic to wipe out their ambition. "That plan will ultimately serve New York well, and it should not be left on the shelf," he says. Byford is unlikely to return anytime soon, though. He says he doesn't miss the complexity of being answerable to both city and state governments, and he loves working with a "very enlightened" mayor in Khan. Pointedly omitting leadership in New York, he adds that he also had "excellent relationships" with two successive mayors in Toronto, the premier of Ontario and the minister of transport in New South Wales.

Hard as it may be for some New Yorkers to believe, what Byford does miss about his old job these days, as he roams TfL's quiet trains to monitor the network, is riding the subway. "It's like a different world underground," he says, recalling the entertainers and "the kaleidoscope of experiences" he would witness. "In London, people don't tend to look at each other on the tube, let alone speak. I'm back into being my more reserved British self." □

A man steps out
of his tent when
medics arrive
for a check-in
at a homeless
encampment in
Wheeling, W.Va.,
on Dec. 18

—
700%
*Increase in homeless
deaths in the city
since 2019*





OUT IN THE COLD

With support networks shut down by the pandemic,
deaths among the nation's homeless have skyrocketed

—

PHOTOGRAPHS BY REBECCA KIGER

STORY BY PAUL MOAKLEY/WHEELING, W.VA.

After the temporary
winter shelter
closed on March 16,
the unhoused
prepare to live
outside for the next
nine months

—
580,466

*The U.S. homeless
population as counted
by HUD in January
2020*





W

WHEN WEST VIRGINIA DECLARED A state of emergency to arrest the coronavirus, the social network that aids the homeless froze along with everything else. Charities that offered daily meals and warming stations shut down. Volunteers, many elderly, were too afraid to work in the soup kitchens they usually ran. There was suddenly no place to eat or go to the bathroom. “Our homeless community found themselves being told to stay entirely outdoors,” says Kate Marshall, a charity worker in Wheeling, a city in the state’s northern panhandle. “There was not one indoor place to go from March until fall of 2020.”

Ordered to shelter in place, people without shelter died at an alarming rate. In a bad year here, according to social workers from three charity organizations, two to four of the unhoused die. Over the past year, they have tallied 22 deaths, a sevenfold increase.

Only two of the deaths are suspected to be from COVID-19. But all occurred during the collapse of the safety net

that in normal times addresses the complex mix of afflictions—trauma, medical conditions, addiction—that accompany homelessness, and worsened during the profound isolation of the pandemic. “There were days when there were no services at all,” says John Moses, who runs the Winter Freeze Shelter, a refuge of last resort for the three coldest months.

What happened in Wheeling is happening across the country. Even before the pandemic lockdowns that fell hardest on low-income Americans, the Department of Housing and Urban Development reported U.S. homelessness at 580,466 people, up 7% from a year earlier.

Deaths are rising even faster. In San Francisco, the department of public health says deaths tripled over the past year in an unhoused population of 8,035. In Los Angeles, home to a vast homeless population tallied at 41,290, deaths increased by 32%, per the online news organization Capital & Main. Homeless deaths in Washington, D.C., soared by 54%. In New York City, the Coalition for the Homeless reported a death rate up 75%.

The spikes throw the sharpest shadows in smaller places. “We’ve lost a lot of people that, you know, we’ve

regarded as part of the family,” says Moses. When the homeless are not anonymous, every death registers as a memory.

SIX MONTHS before lockdown, Wheeling lost its only hospital with an acute-mental-health facility. Over community protests, Alecto Healthcare Services shuttered the 200-bed Ohio Valley Medical Center, and with it a 30-bed mental-health unit known as Hillcrest. Then Fairmont Regional Medical Center also closed. Both had provided drug treatment, plus outpatient services, for some 1,600 people. It was a significant loss in a state that had the country’s highest per capita opioid death rate before the pandemic. In the isolation enforced by lockdown, overdose deaths nearly doubled: from 12 in 2019 to 22 in 2020, according to the Wheeling police department.

One of those cut off from care was a woman who went by the name Clarice. A young mother, estranged from her family, she was living on the streets while suffering from schizophrenia. “When she was discharged, she was in active psychosis, telling me people were trying to kill her by throwing aspirin on her that she said was burning her skin,” recalls Crystal Bauer, a registered nurse who directs a street medical team for the homeless community.

But Clarice stood out for more than her condition. “When I first met her, we clicked so hard,” says Chrissy Butler, a friend she met on the streets.

“I think anyone on the streets here would say it, that she was a very good friend,” says Marshall. “If she found clothes or makeup in the Free Store, she would share everything. That might seem insignificant, but in this world, it says a lot about her and why people were endeared to her. They could find those moments of clarity within her and connect with that. If she wasn’t that sweet, with her mental-health condition, people would have steered away. But it was the opposite. People watched over her when she wasn’t doing well.”

Clarice’s death distills the tragedy of the past 12 months. Her tent was near the center of the encampment in



Jessica lights a candle to warm her tent on Dec. 20 after refusing to shelter in the former psychiatric ward where she was once treated

the woods beside the shuttered hospital. When a neighbor known as Ghost found her body, she had been dead for three days. Three months later, Ghost, a veteran, would be found dead in a tent too.

By October, the police had forcibly removed the camp after an uptick in property- and drug-related crime. Wheeling police chief Shawn Schwertfeger describes Clarice's death as "a very tragic situation" and "another contributing factor." Months later, all that remained of the camp were impressions by the tents, branches pressed down like deer beds.

Both Clarice and Ghost died from accidental drug overdoses. "Trauma begets trauma," says Marshall. "It is not surprising to me that when we're having a crisis, we revert back to whatever coping mechanisms we know. It's like taking all the traumas and bringing them to this convergence point of rejection, loneliness, insecurity and no support systems. They lost access to their social workers. Suddenly we were having to say, 'Yes, your friend just died because they were traumatized and they overdosed. But we're just going to have to sit here under this bridge.' It just felt like harm on top of harm."

Moses is at the center of Wheeling's patchwork support network as CEO of Youth Services System (YSS), a nonprofit that provides a number of residential and community-based programs for children and adults. YSS operates recovery houses, a detention center, and mentoring and prevention services. "We never get bored," says Moses. The charity's work is deeply entwined with an opioid crisis that, having found its national epicenter in West Virginia, followed an arc: as providers moved from over-the-counter pill mills to dealers peddling heroin and fentanyl, customers moved as well. Some to tents. Some to graves.

"An addict does drugs to get away," says Butler. "I just want people to see we're somebody's daughter, son, mother, cousin or whatever. And they need to understand we are human." A 2019 survey by the local Coalition for the Homeless found that 96% experienced homelessness as a result of substance-use disorder. And over the



A homeless person leaves the winter shelter located in the former Ohio Valley Medical Center in Wheeling in January

past year, they died here at a rate many times higher than the rate of deaths from the virus. "It showed the strength of the opioid crisis," says Moses. "It surpassed COVID."

AFTER CLARICE'S DEATH, the rest of the year unraveled "like a piece of yarn," says Butler. "You pull it, and it just comes all unfrayed." As fall gave way to winter, local photographer Rebecca Kiger spent months documenting the community and efforts to help. With the nearest psychiatric hospital now almost 10 miles away, the empty Ohio Valley Medical Center was pushed into service as the new Winter Freeze Shelter. A second-floor space had been Hillcrest, the psych ward that a number of the homeless associated with past traumas. Some chose to remain in the cold.

"You know we use that word *less*," Moses says. "They're homeless, they're penniless, they're this less. I think we start choking on these abstracts that we assign people that doesn't explain them." The kinship between helpers and those they help runs deep here. "Because I have my own stuff," says Bauer, the RN. "The short version of my story is, I grew up in a home where I experienced every kind of abuse. When I tell people it is a miracle that

I am not homeless and living under a bridge, it absolutely is."

But a dividing point arrives on the morning of March 16, when the shelter closes until the next winter. For a quiet 55-year-old father named Ron, the day starts with a goodbye country breakfast, a half hour spent assembling donated supplies, then a lift to the hillside campsite that will be his home for the next nine months. "I'm kind of embarrassed by the mess," Ron says, lifting a pink blanket that serves as a door. It opens on two rooms of interconnected tarps willed together with rope and pieces of wood. Clearing piles of clothes and used furniture for us, Ron checks to see if everything is where he left it.

"We'll sit here and keep a fire going constantly," he says. "I'm exhausted. I've been out here three years off and on."

When talk turns to the deaths of the past year, Ron says, "I don't think they intended to end their life like this, you know. We all say we're going back to normal, but what's normal? I don't know how to get there."

The morning is cold. Everything feels damp. "We have some friends that are missing right now," he says, "and I'm feeling pretty alone." —*With reporting by* JULIA ZORTHIAN □



Chrissy at her encampment under a highway overpass during the first snowstorm of the year, on Dec. 16



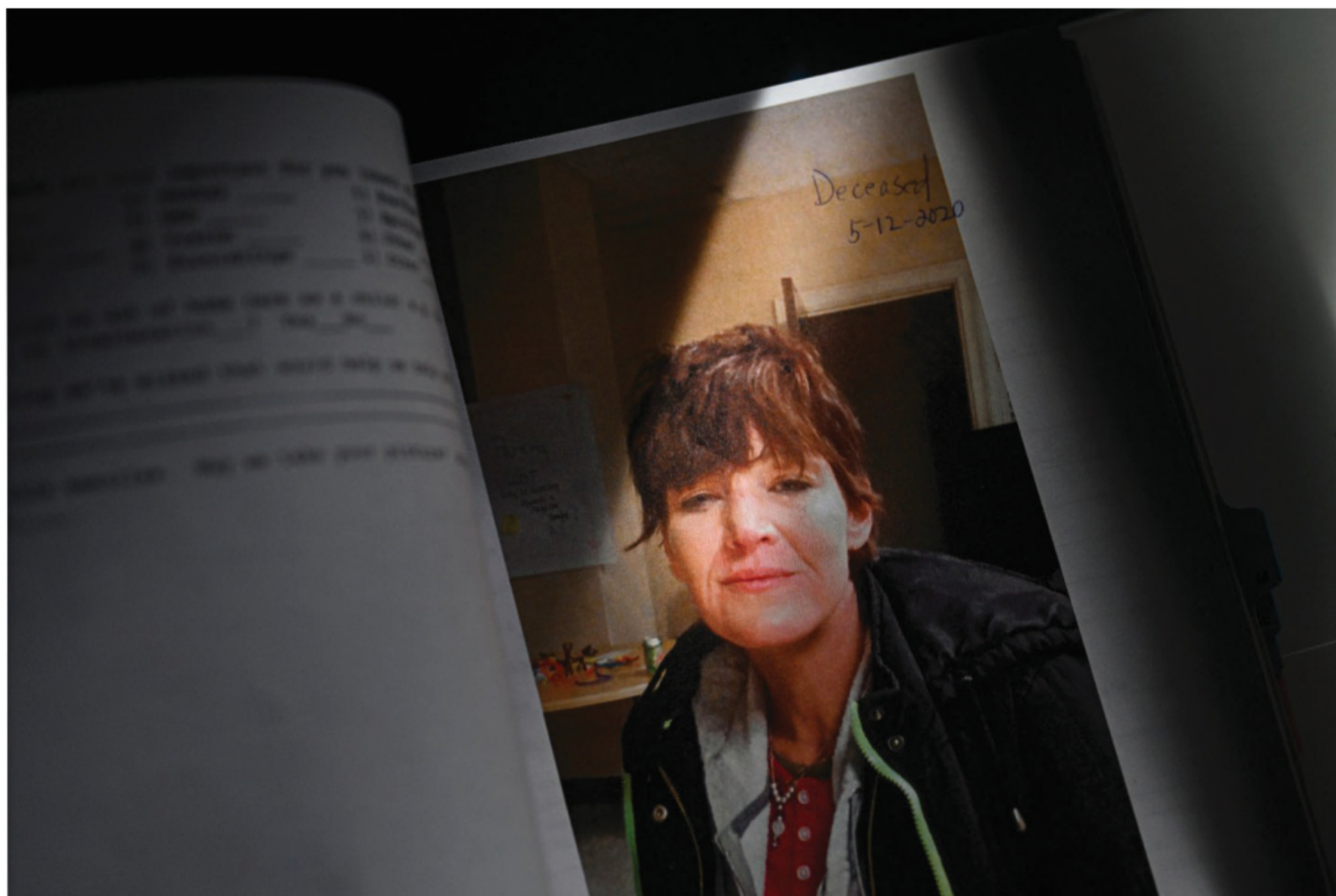
After the hospital closed, the city donated its former mental-health facility for use as a shelter



Physician assistant Erica Fitzsimmons performs health checkups at the winter shelter as a volunteer for Project Hope



John Moses, director of the Winter Freeze Shelter, and Kate Marshall visit the new shelter space



A photograph of Clarice, who died in May, in the records of Youth Services System, a local charity



Ron at his hillside encampment on March 16, the day after the winter shelter closed for nine months



Jessica comforts
Erica on Dec. 16 at
a church service
hosted by Street
Moms, a local
organization

—
15%
*Increase in the number
of people experiencing
chronic homelessness
in the U.S. since 2019*

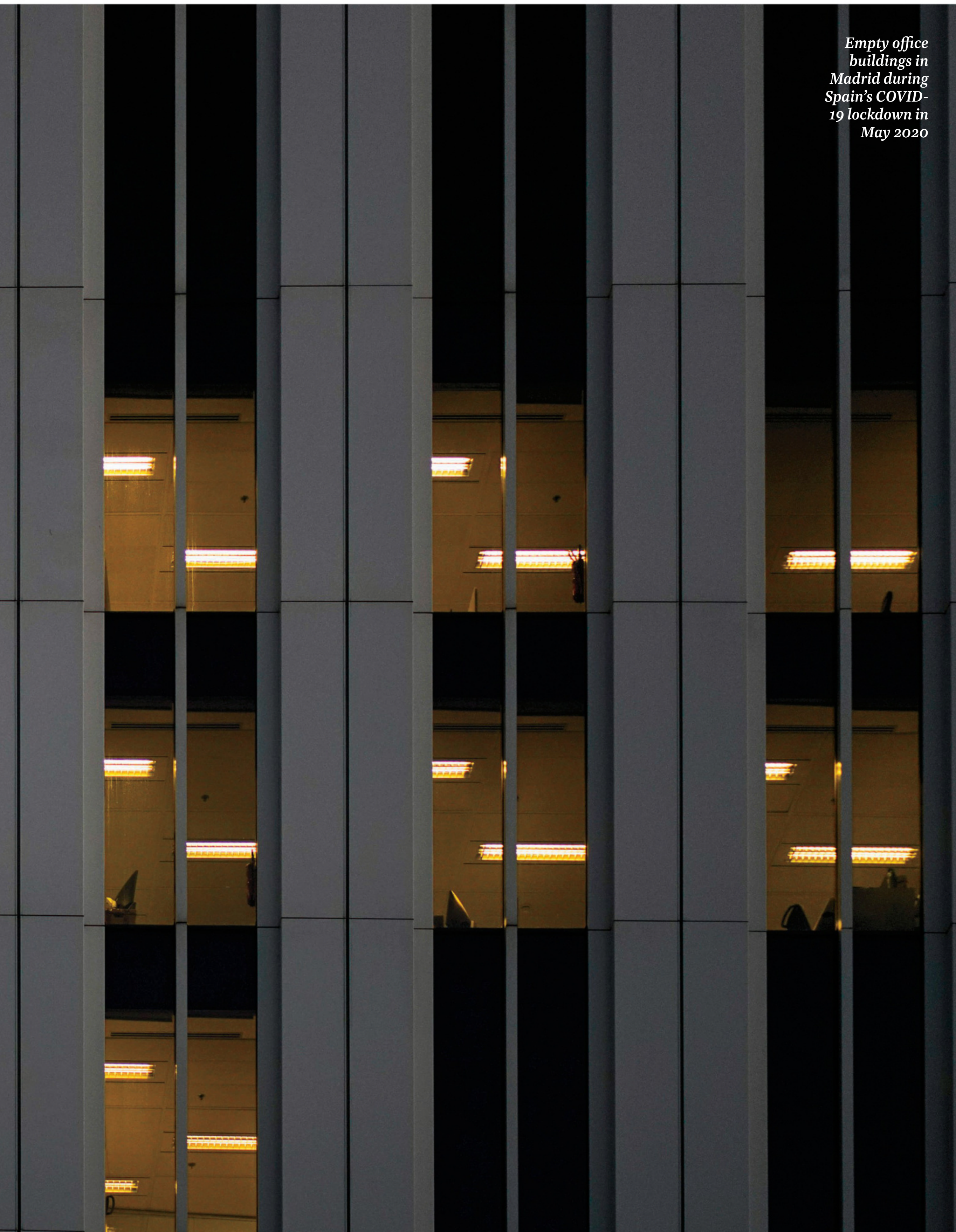


World

T.G.I.... Thursday?

Spain's trial of a four-day workweek could make the idea go mainstream **By Lisa Abend**

*Empty office
buildings in
Madrid during
Spain's COVID-
19 lockdown in
May 2020*





IT WASN'T LONG AFTER HER COMPANY switched to a four-day workweek that Pilar Meseguer began noticing the benefits. Absenteeism fell nearly 30% at Delsol, the software firm in southern Spain where Meseguer is a deputy director, and satisfaction rates among both her co-workers and customers rose. But there were also some smaller, more personal gains. "I could go to the supermarket on Friday instead of Saturday, when it's packed with people," Meseguer says. "It's a simple thing, but it makes a big difference."

She may soon have company, including at the market. Earlier this year, the Spanish government agreed to begin a small nationwide trial of a four-day workweek, promising further details in late March. The concept itself is not new; no less an authority than economist John Maynard Keynes famously argued in 1928 that ever increasing efficiency would inevitably free up more leisure time within industrial societies, and since at least the 1960s the four-day week has periodically popped up as either a natural outcome of growing productivity or a solution for economic ills.

Already, dozens of companies around the world—as well as at least one municipal government—have trimmed a day from their weekly schedules. But Spain's pilot is on track to be the first national test. And although the transformation of something as deeply ingrained and seemingly immutable as the Monday-to-Friday grind might be controversial, there are indications it may be an idea whose time has come.

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, concerns about work-life balance had pushed some companies to experiment with a shorter workweek. Like Delsol, both Microsoft Japan and the U.S.-based burger chain Shake Shack launched trials of a four-day schedule in 2019; the latter proved so successful a recruitment tool that the company extended the experiment to new markets. But after the coronavirus pushed millions around the world to work from home, other companies, including Unilever in New Zealand and Shopify in Canada, launched trials of their own to respond to employees' growing sense of burnout or simply buoyed by the newfound flexibility in the workplace.

In Spain, the idea has been growing for a couple of years. When the progressive party Más País launched in 2019, it included the four-day workweek as part of its platform and went on to propose the trial that won the Spanish government's approval in January. The pilot, which is expected to launch in September and last three years, is set to use €50 million in E.U. funding to compensate around 200 companies for reducing their employees' workweek to 32 hours without cutting their salaries. Íñigo Errejón, Más País leader and member of parliament, says the change would both help reduce carbon emissions and improve conditions for workers: "How we work now is not biologically or socially sustainable."

'How we work now is not biologically or socially sustainable.'

—Íñigo Errejón, whose Más País party proposed Spain's trial

Political and business leaders in Spain who oppose a four-day week have argued that the reduction would devastate further a country that not only has among the lowest levels of productivity in Europe but also saw its economy shrink 11% last year, the worst contraction since the Spanish Civil War in the 1930s.

Suggesting that the proposal is intended to distract from more serious problems like skyrocketing unemployment, Nuria Chinchilla, a professor at IESE Business School, sums up this point of view. "It's a very difficult

time, with the economy gravely affected. Any talk of increasing costs to businesses is contradictory to economic recovery. Maybe this isn't the right moment."

From Errejón's perspective, the change is relevant precisely because the economy, long dependent on the kind of mass tourism that ceased to exist during the pandemic, is in crisis. And there is some research to back him up. In a study published in January in the *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, Luis Cárdenas and Paloma Villanueva found that a five-hour reduction in work hours across Spain in 2017 would have created 560,000 jobs, raised salaries by 3.7% and increased the GDP by 1.4%.

Companies that reduce their employees' hours generally have to hire more staff to maintain the same level of productivity, the researchers note. Additional salaries drive costs up, but those can be largely offset by raising prices. "Because it is hiring more people who are then spending more, and prices are increasing, the overall effect is positive," Cárdenas, an economist at Madrid's Complutense University, said in an interview.

Yet there are other concerns beyond the purely economic ones. Chinchilla also sees the plan as potentially counterproductive when it comes to achieving work-life balance. "Reducing the workweek to four days means either cutting salaries or adding hours, and the workday in Spain is already really long," she says. "What we need is more flexibility on these questions, not more limits."

STILL, FLEXIBILITY and a mandated Friday off aren't necessarily mutually exclusive—and for evidence, look a few thousand miles north of Spain, at the Danish town of Odsherred. In a bid to increase the satisfaction of municipal-government employees—many of whom commute from Copenhagen, roughly 50 miles away—the town reduced their workweek to Monday through Thursday in 2019. In the experiment, which will run until September 2022, workers divide their contracted hours among four days instead of five. "At first everyone was quite worried, because they thought that on the days they worked, they would be putting in very long days at the office," says Claus Steen Madsen, Odsherred's municipal director, who designed the pilot. "But that's why we also emphasized



flexibility. People could work from home or while they're on the train."

Odsherred also emphasized greater efficiency, making telephone assistance available to the public by appointment only and encouraging a 30-minute limit on staff meetings. But having a longer weekend proved popular. "One thing that people are saying," says Madsen, "is that the three days off allow them to recharge, so they have more energy the rest of the time. It doesn't matter that you have to work a little bit more those four days, because you just do it better."

The municipality expects to continue with the four-day week after the trial period. But there have been some surprises: satisfaction with the change was lower in departments where staff felt they were being closely monitored by their bosses on how they spent their time. "We learned that if you don't trust in your employees, you can't do this," Madsen says. "You have to believe from the start that employees actually know what they're doing."

Trust, in other words, influences whether workers appreciate the change or resent it. But other factors do too, says Janne Gleerup, a professor at Denmark's Roskilde University who has studied the reduced-week program in Odsherred and elsewhere. "Level of education, type of work performed, social relationships and degree of autonomy all play a role,"

▲
After cities like Seville, above,
emptied during COVID-19,
flexible work grew in appeal

she says. "Families with small children tend to find that a four-day week actually increases stress on them rather than reducing it. Especially women can feel they have been caught in a time trap because by late afternoon, they need to be parents but have to be workers at the same time."

The measure can have unintended consequences for gender equality as well. In 2020, school closings and the embrace of work from home accentuated the existing imbalance between men's and women's unpaid labor. According to one European study, women spent an average of 62 hours a week caring for children and 23 doing housework, while men devoted 36 and 15, respectively. "Women still have their jobs to do, but they take over all domestic tasks too," Gleerup says, "so it re-installs these traditional gender roles."

As more companies and countries float their own four-day plans, success may well depend on the workplace's adaptability. But the pandemic has done nothing if not teach the value of flexibility. Accounting for the momentum toward a new work schedule, Joe Ryle, who works at the U.K.-based 4 Day Week Campaign, told

CNBC that the sudden shift to working from home has "opened people's eyes to the fact that change can happen, and that it can happen very quickly, when we want it to."

THE PANDEMIC HAS ALSO reminded many that much about how we work ... isn't working. "The reason why there's these movements internationally now," says Gleerup, "is that we work all the time, and then we spend our weekends just sleeping, cleaning and preparing for Monday, so everything is defined by work. But if you have three days off, you have time where you don't actually have to do that, where you're reminded that life is not all about work. It can be emancipating."

It certainly has been that way for Meseguer. Delsol invested €400,000 in its switch to a four-day week, hiring additional employees to cover the schedule and buying new technology. But revenues continued to grow at the same rate they had in previous years, and absenteeism dropped 28%. It's also helped with recruitment and retention: not one of the company's 189 employees has left since the plan went into effect. "You learn that a business works better when it cares for its team," Meseguer says. "If a company doesn't focus on its people, no subsidy or legislative change is going to make it work." —With reporting by MADELINE ROACHE/LONDON □



PTSD.



Addiction.



Depression.

Hope?

The psychedelic ibogaine is illegal, potentially deadly—
and could inspire new treatments for some of mainstream
medicine's most undertreated conditions

By Mandy Oaklander



Amber Capone had become afraid of her husband.

The “laid-back, bigger than life and cooler than cool” man she’d married had become isolated, disconnected and despondent during his 13 years as a U.S. Navy SEAL. Typically, he was gone 300 days of the year, but when he was home, Amber and their two children walked on eggshells around him. “Everyone was just playing nice until he left again,” Amber says.

In 2013, Marcus retired from the military. But life as a civilian only made his depression, anger, headaches, anxiety, alcoholism, impulsivity and violent dreams worse. Sometimes he’d get upset by noon and binge-drink for 12 hours. Amber watched in horror as his cognitive functioning declined; Marcus was in his late 30s, but he would get lost driving his daughter to volleyball, and sometimes he couldn’t even recognize his friends. Psychologists had diagnosed him with posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression and anxiety, but antidepressants, Ambien and Adderall didn’t help. He visited a handful of brain clinics across the country, which diagnosed him with postconcussive syndrome after a childhood of football—then a career punctuated by grenades, explosives, rifles and shoulder-fired rockets. But all they offered were more pills, none of which helped either.

Marcus wasn’t the only one suffering in his tight-knit community of Navy SEALs and special-operations veterans. A close friend killed himself, and Amber knew her husband could be next. “I truly thought that Marcus would be the one having the suicide funeral,” Amber says.

There was one last option.

One of Marcus’ retired Navy SEAL friends, who had similarly struggled, had traveled internationally to take ibogaine, a psychedelic drug illegal in the U.S. The ibogaine experience had been transformative for him, and he thought it might be the same for Marcus. “I thought it was crazy,” Marcus says. “How can you take another pill to solve all your problems?” But Amber begged him to try it, and Marcus gave in. On Veterans Day in 2017, Marcus checked into a treatment center in Mexico, popped an ibogaine pill, slipped

on eyeshades and noise-canceling headphones, and went on his first-ever psychedelic trip. After an hour or so, he entered a waking dream state and watched a movie of his life play out before his eyes. It lasted 12 hours, and it was awful at times. “Imagine some of the worst experiences of your life,” Marcus says. “You’re going to experience these again.”

Life events flipped through his mind’s eye in rapid fire. Other times, painful memories slowed to a crawl. Marcus saw himself having conversations with his dead father, with buddies he’d lost to the wars over the years, with God. “You can’t hide from the medicine,” he says. “It’s just going to go down there and basically pull up any traumas, anything hiding in your subconscious that may be affecting you that you don’t even realize.”

When it was over, Marcus felt as if he’d finally put down a heavy load he’d been carrying for years. For the first time in a long time, he didn’t want a drink, and he didn’t touch alcohol for a year after. “I was thinking clear. I wasn’t impulsive anymore. I had no anxiety. I wasn’t depressed,” he says. Amber couldn’t believe it, but when she picked him up, she knew she had her husband back. “When he walked into the room, it was as though I was witnessing him the first time I met him,” she says. “His anger and his darkness and his whole demeanor had changed. All of that was gone. He was easy. He was light. He was present. He was happy. It just absolutely blew my mind.”

ONCE DISMISSED AS A FRINGE, counterculture vice, psychedelics are rapidly approaching acceptance in mainstream medicine. These drugs uniquely change the brain, and a person’s awareness of experiences, in the span of just a few hours. This fast-acting shift could be useful in mental-health treatments, and research is already supporting this notion. Just one dose of psilocybin, the active ingredient in magic mushrooms, was recently shown to ease depression and anxiety in cancer patients—an outcome that lasted for years after their trip. Researchers are recognizing that psychedelics can provide

a radical new approach to mental-health treatments at a time when innovation is desperately needed.

For addiction in particular, the need has never been greater. More Americans died from drug overdoses last year than ever before, aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Weekly counts of drug overdoses were up to 45% higher in 2020 than in the same periods in 2019, according to research from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention published in February. Available treatments can’t meet the need. They aren’t effective for everyone, may require long-term adherence and are sometimes addictive themselves.

Ibogaine is one of the most promising psychedelics for addiction. Few people have heard of it, it’s illicit in the U.S., and nobody does it for fun. It’s not pleasant. It could kill you. But for extinguishing addiction—and a range of other issues—many people swear there’s nothing like it. Derived from the root bark of an African shrub, it first entered the U.S. consciousness in the 1960s thanks to Howard Lotsof—then a 19-year-old completely outside the medical establishment—who experimented with the drug and noticed it wiped out his heroin addiction. It did the same for several of Lotsof’s peers who tried it in New York City. (*See sidebar, page 86.*) He found ibogaine so helpful that he launched a campaign to get researchers to dig into it more deeply. But pharmaceutical companies didn’t bite. Ibogaine is a naturally occurring plant compound and therefore difficult to patent; plus, nobody knew exactly how it worked, and drug companies historically did not see addiction medications as profitable. In 1970, the federal government classified ibogaine (along with other psychedelics) as a Schedule I drug, declaring it had no medical use and a high potential for abuse. But case studies in which ibogaine had helped heroin users successfully detox—including Lotsof’s New York City group and another from the Netherlands in the early ’90s—were promising enough that one U.S. government agency took notice.

In 1991, the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) decided to fund animal research into ibogaine; the resulting studies (and later ones) in rodents found that ibogaine reduced how much heroin, morphine, cocaine and alcohol the

*Retired Navy SEAL
Marcus Capone
and his wife Amber
started a nonprofit
to fund psychedelic
treatment research
for veterans*



PHOTOGRAPH BY BRENT HUMPHREYS FOR TIME

animals consumed. This work primed the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to greenlight a clinical trial of ibogaine in humans for cocaine dependence, but it fell apart in early stages because of a lack of funding and contractual disputes. NIDA abandoned its interest in ibogaine, citing safety as one concern. There still has been no completed clinical trial in the U.S. to test ibogaine in people.

Now, for the first time, some upstart pharmaceutical companies, including ATAI Life Sciences and MindMed, are realizing there's money to be made here, and they're racing to develop ibogaine or drugs that act like it. But as they start the long slog of chasing FDA approval through clinical trials—with outcomes far from clear—many people are desperate enough to skip the U.S. and try ibogaine in parts of the world where it's unregulated.

Plenty of these people have shared their experiences with researchers through case reports and survey data. The success stories sound eerily alike: a single dose of ibogaine can take you on a visual journey of your most significant life events. You're able to forgive yourself and others for past traumas, and the drug seems to rewire your brain, zapping withdrawal symptoms and extinguishing opioid cravings within hours—with results that can last for weeks, months and sometimes even longer. Unlike buprenorphine and methadone, two common approved medications to overcome opioid addictions, ibogaine is not an opioid substitute. "Ibogaine seems to resolve these signs of opioid withdrawal by a mechanism that is different from an opioid effect, and I think that is what is so interesting about it," says Dr. Kenneth Alper, a longtime ibogaine researcher and an associate professor of psychiatry and neurology at New York University School of Medicine.

Scientists don't know exactly what ibogaine does to the brain. There's some recent evidence—in rats—that ibogaine may increase neurotrophic factors in the brain, which are proteins that encourage neuron growth and plasticity (the ability of the brain to change even in adulthood). These appear to be key in helping the brain remodel to overcome an assault like a substance-use disorder. But since other psychedelics also increase neural plasticity, something more is likely going on.

IBOGAINE: A HISTORY



The drug hails from a shrub called *Tabernanthe iboga*, which is native to Central Africa. Since at least the 1800s, members of the Bwiti religion in Gabon have eaten iboga bark shavings during initiations and coming-of-age ceremonies; those who consume it report visions of and contact with their ancestors and even God. The wider world encountered the hallucinogenic plant in the form of ibogaine, a compound extracted from iboga bark and packed into a pill.

In France, ibogaine was sold and prescribed as an antidepressant and stimulant called Lambarene for more than 30 years until the 1960s, when the government outlawed the sale of ibogaine. But its antiaddictive effects weren't well known in the U.S. until 1962, when Howard Lotsof experimented with it.

Lotsof—who was not a scientist—organized a group of 20 lay drug experimenters in New York City. The participants, all in their late teens and early 20s, tried many hallucinogens including ibogaine. Seven people in the group were hooked on heroin at the time. After they took ibogaine, all seven said they were no longer in heroin withdrawal, and five of them lost their desire to use heroin for six months or longer. Ibogaine was the only drug to have this effect. "Suddenly, I realized that I was not in heroin withdrawal," Lotsof later said of his own ibogaine experience. Nor did he crave it. "Where previously I had viewed heroin as a drug which gave me comfort, I now viewed heroin as a drug which emulated death. The very next thought into my mind was, I prefer life to death."

For the rest of his life, Lotsof tried to get ibogaine developed as a drug to help people with addiction. Though that hasn't happened yet, he brought the drug mainstream attention.

Human clinical trials for ibogaine and addiction are under way. In October, researchers in Spain began testing ibogaine in 20 people trying to wean themselves off methadone. And in an upcoming clinical trial set to begin in Brazil once the pandemic is under control, researchers at the University of São Paulo will give different doses of ibogaine to 12 alcoholic patients to see if it's safe and effective at reducing the amount they drink.

But many are not waiting for studies. If there's even a chance that taking ibogaine will help a person overcome addiction, many are willing to try it. Ibogaine is unregulated in many countries, neither illegal nor approved, and that gray zone has allowed dozens of ibogaine treatment centers to pop up worldwide. Americans desperate to shake their addictions spend thousands of dollars at these clinics, which vary wildly in their practices and treatment standards. Some facilities use licensed physicians and monitor heart activity and other vital signs throughout the trip, while other clinics don't.

Success rates also vary. Some people stop using drugs completely and stay sober for years. Others die. Because of a lack of controlled ibogaine trials, it's difficult to quantify the risks, but the threats to cardiovascular health are particularly concerning. The drug may block certain channels in the heart and slow down heart rate, which can cause fatal arrhythmias. In one observational study published in 2018, researchers followed 15 people as they received ibogaine treatment for opioid dependence in New Zealand, where ibogaine is legal by prescription, and interviewed them for a year after. Eight of the 11 patients who completed the study cut back on or stopped using opioids, and depression improved in all of them. One person died during the treatment, likely because of an ibogaine-induced heart arrhythmia.

But how much risk is too much when nothing else works?

FOUR ROUNDS OF REHAB hadn't touched Bobby Laughlin's heroin addiction. He didn't believe the hype about ibogaine but figured it was his last shot, so he traveled to a clinic in Rosarito Beach, Mexico. Before the flight, he used heroin—and it was the last opiate he ever took. The most valuable outcome of Laughlin's 30-hour ibogaine

experience was that it let him bypass withdrawals, he says, opening a window of opportunity. “One thing that was made very clear to me was that I had to change my life dramatically after the experience if I wanted to capitalize on it and have long-term sobriety,” he says. Laughlin started a private-equity firm in L.A., then a family. “I’ve been able to establish myself,” he says, eight years later. “All roads lead back to ibogaine as the start.”

Alan Davis, a Johns Hopkins University adjunct assistant professor researching psychedelics, has been hired by several clinics outside the U.S.—including the one Laughlin visited—to follow up with clients to see what, if anything, changed in their lives after the treatment. In 2017, Davis published a study in the *Journal of Psychedelic Studies* in which he surveyed 88 people—most of whom had been using opioids daily for at least four years—who had visited an ibogaine clinic in Mexico from 2012 to 2015. About 80% said ibogaine eliminated or drastically reduced their withdrawal symptoms; half said their opioid cravings diminished, and 30% said that after ibogaine, they never used opioids again. Ibogaine “is not a magic bullet,” Davis says, but even a short-term disruption of the sort the psychedelic provides can give addicted people the space and time to make needed changes to their environment, behavioral patterns and relationships.

Addiction may be only the beginning. In a 2020 research paper published in the journal *Chronic Stress*, Davis and his team found that among 51 U.S. veterans who had taken ibogaine in Mexico from 2017 to 2019, there were “very large reductions” in symptoms related to every domain they measured, including suicidal thoughts, PTSD, depression, anxiety and cognitive impairment. “Their improvement [was] way above what we would see with typical currently approved treatments,” Davis says. “Even if you cut these effect sizes in half”—assuming that the data aren’t as accurate as they’d be in a rigorous, controlled trial—“that’s still two to three times more powerful than our currently approved treatments.” More than 80% of the vets surveyed said the psychedelic experience was one of the top five most meaningful experiences of their lives.

“We’re not actually healing problems with medications that we currently have;

we’re just trying to treat the symptoms,” Davis says. Psychedelics like ibogaine, on the other hand, seem “to be showing that we might actually be getting below just symptom reduction into a place where true healing can happen.”

DESPITE INTRIGUING INITIAL DATA like these, modern pharmaceutical companies until recently had not touched ibogaine. Now they’re interested. ATAI Life Sciences, a three-year-old German biotech company focused on psychedelics for mental health, is trying to develop ibogaine as an FDA-approved drug to treat opioid-use disorder. If clinical trials, which are slated to begin in the U.K. in May, support ibogaine’s efficacy, the company’s hope is that an ibogaine capsule would be used at detox centers in the U.S. “I’m a hardcore neuropharmacologist and physician by training,” says Dr. Srinivas Rao, co-founder and chief scientific officer at ATAI. “I’ve viewed it a little skeptically ... but the stories with ibogaine keep surfacing and [keep] being very similar. People seem to get a lot out of this experience.” ATAI is also pursuing noribogaine—the substance ibogaine breaks down to in the body—as a possible addiction treatment.

Fears about how ibogaine affects the heart have scared away most establishment pharmaceutical companies, but Rao calls those worries overblown. “It does hit some of these channels in the heart, and in very uncontrolled settings, it’s certainly been associated with issues of arrhythmia,” he says. “In the context of more controlled settings with medical support, it has not really been associated with any kind of arrhythmia or significant adverse outcome.” Careful dosing and monitoring can lessen risk, Rao says, and trials will eventually uncover ibogaine’s true cardiovascular impact. However,

some risk might be worth it in the context of the drug’s potential benefits. “If this were treating acne, of course—this is not a great choice,” he says. But for opioid addiction, which kills about 128 Americans per day, “some degree of cardiovascular risk is probably acceptable.”

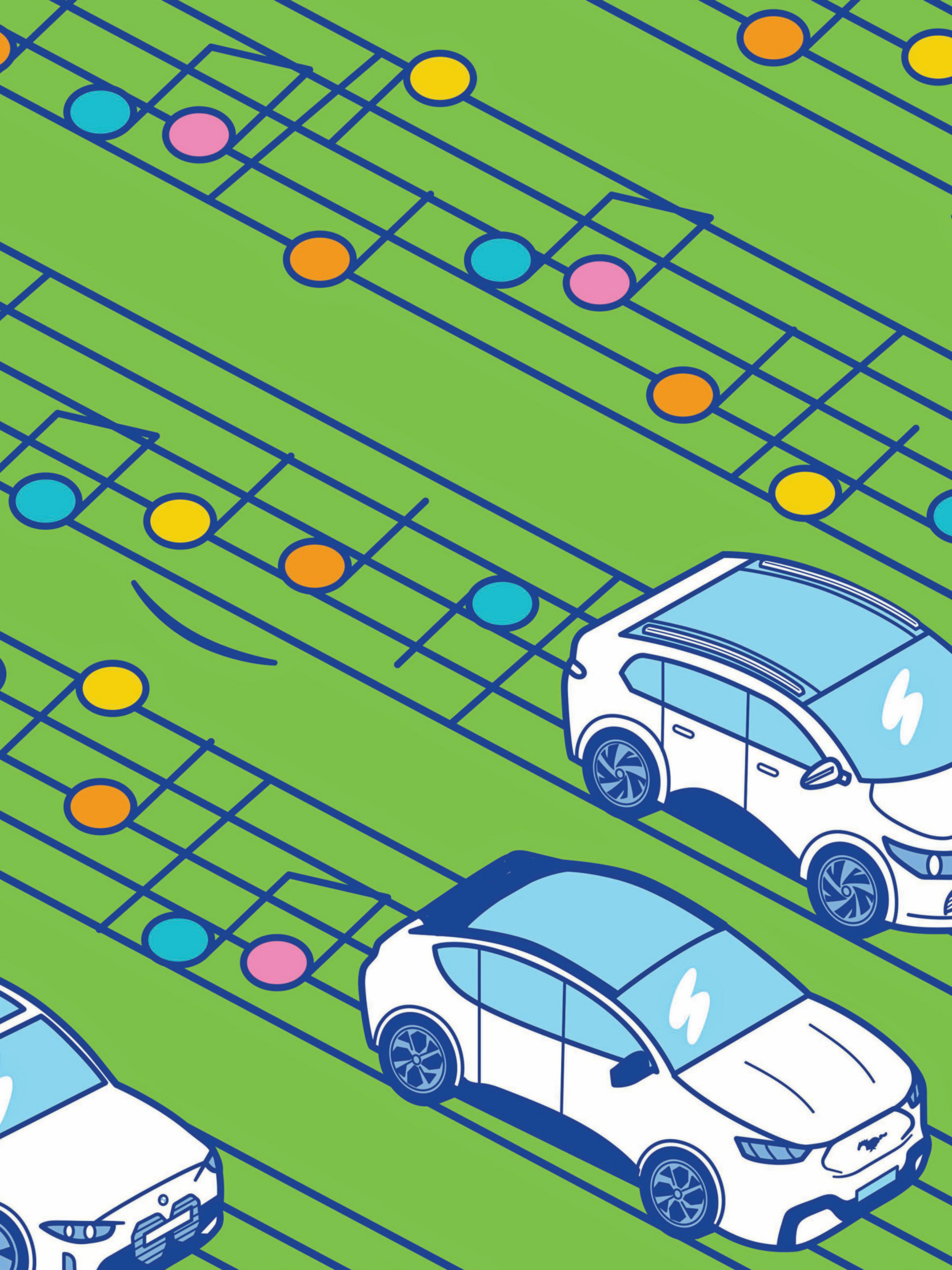
MindMed, a U.S.-based company aiming to develop medicines based on psychedelics, is pursuing a synthetic derivative of ibogaine called 18-MC for opioid addiction. “We do see merit in hallucinogenic drugs,” says J.R. Rahn, CEO and co-founder of MindMed. “We just don’t see the merit of ibogaine, because I don’t think anyone wants to take medicine and have the risk of having a heart attack.” The company’s hope is that 18-MC will have the same impact on withdrawal as ibogaine but won’t come with the psychedelic or heart effects. MindMed’s Phase 1 trial in Australia has so far found no adverse cardiovascular effects with 18-MC. Phase 2 trials, to test if 18-MC lessens opioid withdrawal, are expected to begin this year.

Other synthetic compounds that act like ibogaine are on the horizon. In a study published in December in the journal *Nature*, researchers at the University of California, Davis, engineered a compound that’s structurally similar to ibogaine but less damaging to the heart. It also appears to be nonhallucinogenic, at least in mice. Called tabernanthalog, or TBG, it increased neural plasticity, reduced heroin- and alcohol-seeking behavior, and even had antidepressant effects in rodents; researchers are considering pursuing a study of TBG’s effects on humans.

These innovations are still years off. But in the meantime, Marcus Capone knows that his community of special-operations veterans can’t afford to wait. In 2019, he and his wife Amber started a nonprofit called Veterans Exploring Treatment Solutions (VETS) to fund those who want to receive psychedelic therapies like ibogaine abroad. They’ve funded about 300 veterans so far, with more than 100 currently on the waitlist. VETS is also financing research exploring what ibogaine does to the brains of veterans with symptoms of head trauma.

Marcus hopes that someday, Americans who need it will be able to receive the treatment that, in a single dose, saved his life and gave him a new mission. “This word has to get out,” he says. □

Success rates vary. Some people stop using drugs completely and stay sober for years. Others die





That New Car Sound

WHAT SHOULD YOU HEAR FROM AN ELECTRIC VEHICLE? AUTOMAKERS ARE WORKING ON ANSWERS—AND COMPOSING THE SOUNDSCAPE OF THE 21ST CENTURY CITY

By Alejandro de la Garza

ILLUSTRATION BY ELLEN PORTEUS FOR TIME

Technology

P

PULLING FORD'S NEW ALL-ELECTRIC MUSTANG Mach-E out of a Brooklyn garage late this winter, I felt a little duped. It seemed more like I was driving a giant motorized iPad than the electrified successor to an iconic American muscle car. Just a few weeks earlier, the company's sound designers told me about the lengths to which they had gone to design and digitally produce the perfect engine noise, experimenting with recordings of electric guitars, Formula E race-car engine sounds and the hum of high-voltage power lines. But inside the loaner car's cabin, I didn't hear anything at all. Then, while messing around on the vehicle's touchscreen, I found—and immediately pressed—an all-too-tempting button to engage “unbridled mode.” Next time I hit the accelerator, the car took off, emitting the throaty, electric roar of a cyberpunk spaceship. Now that was more like it.

Because their motors have few moving parts, electric vehicles (EVs) are shockingly quiet. That might sound like a blessing for city dwellers and others sick of traffic noise, but it can create added risk for drivers (who rely on engine noise to get a sense of their speed) and pedestrians (who listen for oncoming traffic). For automakers, it also compromises decades of marketing based on the alluring rumble of a revving engine, especially in sports cars and trucks. “As a car person, there are a lot of expectations for what a car should sound like,” says Ram Chandrasekaran, a transportation analyst at consultancy Wood Mackenzie. “[Even] for a regular person who doesn't care about V-8 engines or manual transmissions, there's still an innate expectation that when you push the pedal, you hear an auditory response.”

So companies like Ford have turned to elite teams of sound designers to create new noises that play from EVs' internal and external speakers, making them safer and more marketable. With EVs on the cusp of widespread adoption—analysts predict their share of U.S. auto sales will quadruple to 8.5% in the next four years—these specialists are getting a once-in-a-lifetime chance to create the sounds that will dominate 21st century highways and cities, just as the constant drone of internal-combustion engines dominated those of the 20th.

The sound designers who spoke to TIME for this story, from companies like BMW, Audi and Ford, often framed their work as an effort to encode



their brands' ethos into a sound. There's precedent for that kind of auditory corporate soul-searching, from ESPN's six-note fanfare to the Yahoo yodel. But there's greater urgency to the automakers' work: the longer it takes for people to switch to electric vehicles, the more damage internal-combustion engines will do to our planet. While EVs aren't completely green—battery production and electricity generation exact an environmental toll—the scientific consensus is that they're less harmful than gasoline cars. Ninety percent of cars on U.S. roads must be electric by 2050 to meet the Paris Agreement's goals, but right now, only about 2 in every 100 cars sold in the country are nonhybrid EVs. And in order to sell, EVs have to drive well and far enough to meet people's needs—as well as sound good to prospective buyers.

EV SALES GREW by 40% worldwide last year, to 2.8 million vehicles from 2 million in 2019, despite the global recession brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. Shares in EV maker Tesla soared by over 700% in 2020 after record-shattering production numbers (though their value has since declined). Meanwhile,

Composer Hans Zimmer's Los Angeles studio, in June 2019



Chinese electric-car brands like Nio and BYD have unveiled new electric sedans to compete on the global level. Traditional automakers have largely acknowledged that the days of internal-combustion engines are numbered. Ford launched its flagship Mach-E late last year as part of an \$11 billion electrification push. BMW aims to double its EV sales in 2021. GM declared early this year that it will make only electric vehicles by 2035. Volkswagen, which embraced EVs after 2015's infamous "Dieselgate" scandal, could outpace Tesla's EV sales as soon as next year, according to Deutsche Bank analysts. U.S. President Joe Biden's victory, and the likely tightening of mileage standards, is likely to spark further growth in EVs.

Today's EV buyers are largely what technology analysts call "early adopters": people who see the benefits of a new innovation despite kinks yet to be hammered out. Convincing electro-skeptics will require advancements not just in performance, range and recharging infrastructure, but successful marketing too. That's where sound designers come in. Regulators around the world require EVs to emit some kind of sound for safety reasons, though they've left

it up to automakers to decide exactly what that sound should be—a big challenge, given that they could theoretically sound like just about anything. "It's kind of like when [the 1993 film] *Jurassic Park* was made, and they had to come up with the sound of a dinosaur," says Jonathan Pierce, a senior manager of experiential R&D at Harman, an automotive-technology company. "None of us has ever heard a dinosaur." In this case, automakers are less re-creating ancient beasts than figuring out what will replace the ones they know so well, but are on the verge of extinction.

Sound designers have long helped craft everything from the roar of a car's engines to the satisfying thump of a closing door. But they have never had the opportunity to shape the soundscape of the future on such a massive scale. For sound engineers, it's like getting the chance to design not just the Guggenheim but the entire Manhattan skyline. In the notoriously rivalrous world of car design, there's little agreement about what that soundscape should be.

Broadly, automakers are divided into two camps. The first includes those who've drawn inspiration from the sound of gasoline cars—or at least tried to make it sound as if something is at work under the hood, though often with a futuristic edge. Audi falls into this category, as does Ford, where sound engineers tried to make the Mustang Mach-E sound reminiscent of its gasoline-powered namesake. "It has to have a perception of power, a perception of grit," says Ford sound-design engineer Brian Schabel. Engineers at British automaker Jaguar took a similar route, paring down the essence of a rumbling V-8 engine and high-revving motorbikes for its I-PACE electric crossover. "You want to get right to the good state where people are comfortable with it, they can understand it, and it's not too weird," says Jaguar Land Rover sound engineer Iain Suffield. Audi sound engineer Stephan Gsell agrees. "The vehicle is a technical device," he says. "It's not a musical instrument."

On the other side are carmakers that have little interest in replicating the sound of a gasoline engine at all. "We shouldn't be trying to communicate that there are moving pistons in this thing," says Danni Venne, lead producer and director of innovation at Made Music Studio, an audio branding agency that designed the engine sound for a recent iteration of the Nissan LEAF. "We're somewhere else now technologically." The LEAF sound, Venne says, has "a little bit of a singing quality to it." GM also took a step in the musical direction, creating EV sounds using sampled guitar, piano and didgeridoo. "We want it to sound organic, yet futuristic," says GM sound engineer Jigar Kapadia.

Then there's whatever BMW is doing with its i4 electric-sedan concept. At low speeds, the i4 sounds like an electrified orchestra warming up for a performance. But as it accelerates, the tone becomes deeper and lower. Then comes a high-pitched

EVs hitting roads near you



BMW i4
BMW's first mainstream e-sedan



MUSTANG MACH-E
Ford's 346-HP SUV will take on Tesla



AUDI E-TRON GT
Driven by Tony Stark in *Avengers: Endgame*

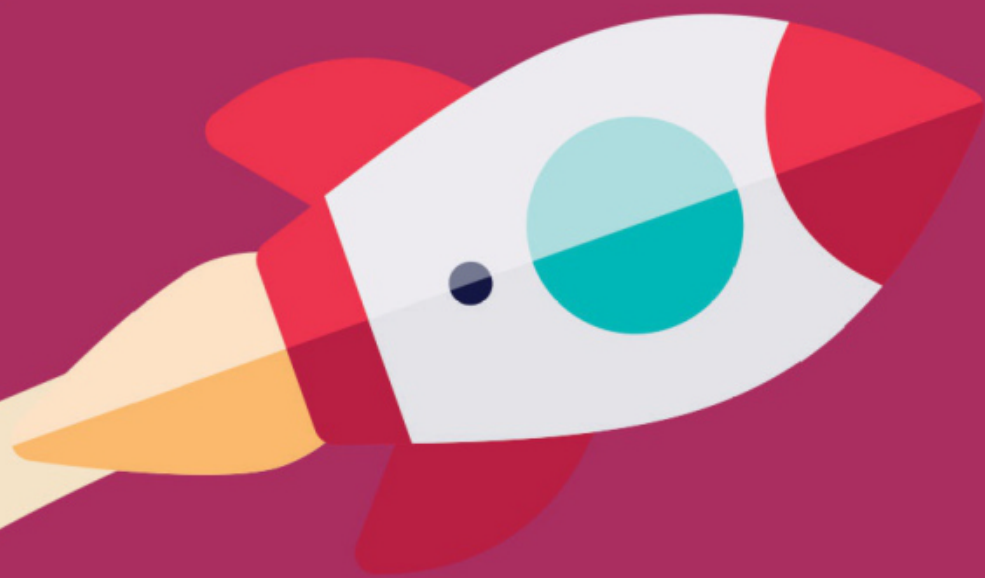


JAGUAR I-PACE
2019's World Car of the Year winner



NISSAN LEAF
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skittering effect, as if some kind of reality-bending reaction were taking place under the hood. “We conceived a sound to celebrate the car, intended as a highly complex performative art installation,” says BMW sound designer Renzo Vitale. Vitale, who worked alongside famed film-score composer Hans Zimmer on the i4, says it was his counterintuitive idea to make the noise deepen as the car gains speed. “It was a metaphoric way to say, ‘We are looking at the past,’” he says. Given Vitale’s curriculum vitae, it’s not surprising BMW ended up with an unconventional result: he composes electronic and orchestral music in his free time, used to play in progressive metal bands and, while getting his Ph.D. in acoustics at Germany’s RWTH Aachen University, created bold live performance art. “I was performing naked, painted black in crazy installations,” Vitale says.

While sound designers like Vitale are excited about the artistic potential in EV sound design, automakers are salivating over the marketing opportunities. One highly produced promotional video posted online by Audi dramatizes its engineers’ search for the perfect sound, featuring the team pensively observing helicopters and wind tunnels. Ford worked with a musician to produce an EDM track sampling the Mach-E’s engine tone. Zimmer features heavily in a recent BMW promo video advertising his work on the i4. “Sound underlines the soul of anything,” the composer says in the spot. “Right now, we are at a really exciting point, shaping the sound of the future.”

All this marketing and branding exuberance may die down if car buyers embrace vehicles that are simply quieter rather than noisy in a different way; EV engine tones may eventually be pared down to only the simplest, most essential sounds. Some experts think carmakers will start using retro gasoline-engine sounds in EVs. Others suggest they will include systems that enable drivers to customize their cars’ engine noises, to make them sound like anything from a motorboat to a spaceship. (Tesla CEO Elon Musk is particularly fond of similar gimmicks; Wikipedia’s “List of Easter eggs in Tesla products” includes more than two dozen examples.)

THAT LAST SCENARIO alarms Trevor Cox, a professor of acoustic engineering at the University of Salford in the U.K. and author of *The Sound Book: The Science of the Sonic Wonders of the World*. “The submotive sound of every city is pretty much its cars,” says Cox. “As soon as you change the sound of cars, you’re going to change how the city sounds.” He argues that excessive customization and diversity of vehicle sound could turn urban soundscapes into jarring, chaotic disasters. “We have a sense of what hell would be like, because we lived through it when people first got mobile phones,” he says. “[Everyone] decided to have a ringtone that was individual, and you had this horrible cacophony.”



But plenty of people leave their smartphones in vibrate-only mode, and it’s likely that most EVs will end up being quiet compared with the gas-powered models we’re used to. That could have major benefits for city dwellers in particular, as studies show that constant exposure to traffic noise can increase people’s risk for high blood pressure, heart attack and stroke. Combined with their lack of emissions, EVs’ relative silence could even make it less awful to live near a major road, fundamentally changing urban design. For that to happen, some sound experts say automakers need to remember that what sounds innovative and interesting in a studio might inspire quite a different feeling for people out in the real world. “We need to have some self-imposed guardrails,” says Pierce. “Not only to do right by our customers but to worry about the society as a whole.”

Driving around New York City in Ford’s Mach-E, I thought about what the roads of the future might sound like. The not-quite-Mustang produced a humming, vaguely electric noise as it accelerated, halfway between a pony car and a *Star Wars* pod racer. Several EV sound designers spoke about being inspired by sci-fi movies; Zimmer himself composed the score for Christopher Nolan’s *Interstellar*. Those films may have created a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy, as our imagined futures shape the real sounds of our streets. While sci-fi movies tend to be dystopian, these designers’ work may end up making our future cities at least a little safer and healthier, with less sound and air pollution. But exactly what our streets will sound like when they’re crowded with EVs is still in the hands of those auditory specialists with their strings and synths. “Hans and I keep talking about elegance, the idea of bringing elegance to the streets,” says Vitale. “We want to share a vision of the sound of the future that maybe helps make cities a better place.” □

▲
Audi sound
engineers
Stephan Gsell and
Rudolf Halbmeir
experiment with
sound-production
techniques

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HEROES OF 2020
From citizens providing food and shelter to those
in need to volunteers who protected their
neighbors from natural disasters, these heroes
went above and beyond the call of duty in 2020.
MADE POSSIBLE BY **STATE FARM**

Heroes

Leaders
AWKWAFINA
BY SANDRA OH

Advocates

FAMILY

Time Off

Streaming services are teeming with ripped-from-the-headlines documentaries

ESSAY

How docu-mania took streaming by storm

By Judy Berman

INSIDE

THE MUST-READ BOOKS
ARRIVING IN APRIL

AN "URBAN WESTERN"
ARRIVES ON NETFLIX

TAYLOR SWIFT'S PLAN TO TAKE
CONTROL OF HER SONGS

PHOTOGRAPH BY MICHAEL MARCELLE FOR TIME

Time Off is reported by Simmone Shah

TimeOff Opener

LOCKDOWN HAS DISTORTED OUR PERCEPTIONS of time, making months of mandatory monotony congeal into a goo of boredom and malaise. In fact, one of the only reliable ways of marking time during this pandemic year has been through the series of buzzy documentaries that bound us together in isolation.

The clock started, of course, with *Tiger King* last March. April brought ESPN's ratings smash *The Last Dance*, a retrospective of Michael Jordan's final NBA season that hit the spot for fans in live-sports withdrawal. HBO kicked off summer with an adaptation of late crime writer Michelle McNamara's book *I'll Be Gone in the Dark* and ended it with *The Vow*, an inside look at the NXIVM "sex cult" that set Twitter ablaze weekly. Nature doc *My Octopus Teacher*, now an Oscar nominee, became an unlikely global hit in the fall. Most recently, FX and Hulu's *The New York Times Presents: Framing Britney Spears* fueled a reckoning over the star's mistreatment.

When *Game of Thrones* staggered off the premium-cable battlefield two years ago, many wondered if it would be the last TV series that cut across demographics and political tribes to penetrate every inch of the culture. Since then, we've seen a fair number of prestige dramas break out; in 2020 that list included *The Queen's Gambit*, *Little Fires Everywhere*, *Lovecraft Country* and *The Undoing*. But it suddenly seems more likely for the watercooler show of any given moment to be nonfiction—and for that nonfiction show to be packaged as a docuseries or feature, instead of crossing an increasingly blurry line into the realm of highly manipulated but technically unscripted reality TV.

A wave that broke early in the streaming era and hit tsunami levels in lockdown, docu-mania has reached a point at which every big headline seems bound for streaming. In recent weeks, we've gotten dives into QAnon, WeWork, the college-admissions scandal, last winter's COVID-stricken *Diamond Princess* cruise and this winter's GameStop short squeeze, among others. For better or worse, we're watching a genre step off its highbrow pedestal.

DOCUMENTARIES HAVE ALWAYS SUFFERED from the misperception that they're all textbooks in motion—an idea that persisted despite the youth-oriented rock docs of the 1960s and the darkly comic political crusades of Michael Moore and his early-aughts emulators. It even came as a surprise when profiles in decency like *Won't You Be My Neighbor?* and *RBG* ruled the box office a few years ago.

The current crop of straight-to-streaming docs has roots in each of these eras. A Netflix movie has become de rigueur for pop stars. Many recent streaming hits—not just *Tiger King*, but also Netflix's and Hulu's dueling Fyre Festival post-mortems and HBO Max's '80s-tastic *Class Action Park*—have adopted the humor of Moore's heyday. And a lot of these films and series address the tumult of the Trump years (HBO's *Agents of Chaos*, on Russian election interference; Amazon's voter-suppression doc *All In*) or provide a gentler antidote to it. What is *My Octopus Teacher* if not a cephalopod Mister Rogers?

Docu-mania also feels inextricably connected to the



Joe Exotic, ratings king: according to Nielsen, Netflix subscribers watched 15.6 billion minutes of *Tiger King* in 2020

twin explosions of prestige true-crime content and podcasts, both traceable to *Serial*'s debut in 2014. Crime docuseries soon broke out on TV, in HBO's *The Jinx* and Netflix's *Making a Murderer*. There has always been an audience for smart dissections of brutal acts. But the fervency with which Americans embraced true crime in the lead-up to the 2016 election suggests a profound collective thirst to see wrongdoing exposed and defeated through the revelation of facts.

That thirst kept the stream of information flowing. We got crime cut with sports, media criticism and celebrity culture in ESPN's *O.J.: Made in America* and crime entangled with cults, spirituality and celebrity culture in Netflix's *Wild Wild Country*. The craze collided with 2018's so-called Summer of Scam, yielding not just the Fyre docs but also HBO's Elizabeth Holmes profile *The Inventor*. During Donald Trump's tenure in the White House, filmmaker Alex

NETFLIX



Gibney—who made *The Inventor* before co-directing *Agents of Chaos* and Hulu’s COVID-mismanagement exposé *Totally Under Control*—investigated the many scams associated with his inner circle.

It sounds like a paradox that even as Trump undermined his constituents’ faith in what he called “the fake news media,” millions of people across the country embraced long-form audio and video journalism. These formats did seem to resonate particularly with Dems desperate for counter-narratives to the former President’s “alternative facts.” From a less partisan perspective, they offered refuge from an out-of-control news cycle, with crises flaring up and flaming out the same day. What a relief to log off and linger over a single true story for an hour or 12, rather than just wearily scrolling past it.

That’s probably one reason why the front-page-to-streaming pipeline has become so crowded—and the interval

between breaking news and in-depth doc shrank from years to months, if not weeks. Meanwhile, as new streaming services proliferate, they’re satisfying demand for original content with lots of cost-effective nonfiction offerings. Launched in January, discovery+ is quickly building a library of docs to complement its unscripted TV.

The pandemic has accelerated docu-mania too. Last April, the *Hollywood Reporter* forecast that “access to archival footage, remote postproduction capabilities and even teleconference interviews” would lead to a COVID-related docuseries boom. Hence HBO’s eye-opening *Diamond Princess* doc *The Last Cruise*, which pairs new interviews with cell-phone footage shot on the ship.

WHILE THEY’VE MOSTLY SHED their fusty reputation, documentaries still give the impression of being more nutritious than the average TV treat. That’s not always the case, though. True crime has been criticized for exploiting victims. The line separating some docuseries from reality soaps has blurred to nonexistence. Anyone who hit play on *Tiger King* hoping for insight into the ethics of private zoos instead found a *Jerry Springer* feud that doubled as an American Rorschach test: Do you prefer the female nanny-state crusader with a martyr complex or the vain male libertarian who wants her dead?

The ascendant sub-genre of ripped-from-the-headlines doc has its own inherent pitfalls. On a streaming service, these titles can function as video clickbait, luring in viewers with a vaguely familiar, often salacious story. In that sense, they are streaming’s answer to popular, long-running newsmagazine series like *60 Minutes*. Timeliness doesn’t necessarily mean shoddiness. The riveting HBO series *Q: Into the Storm* tracks director Cullen Hoback’s arguably successful three-year quest to unmask QAnon’s shadowy leader. But it’s equally engaging as an explainer on how overlapping coalitions of extremely online reactionaries have thrown open the Overton window to mass right-wing delusion.

What a relief to log off and linger over a single true story for an hour or 12, rather than just wearily scrolling past it

Hoback leaves viewers with a question: Should old free-speech laws protect dangerous new conspiracy theories?

More often, however, newsy docs are coming off as rushed. *Operation Varsity Blues: The College Admissions Scandal*, from *Fyre* director and *Tiger King* producer Chris Smith, casts Matthew Modine as disgraced college counselor Rick Springer in re-enactments of recorded phone calls between the white collar criminal and his rich, famous clients. This is all very clickable. Unfortunately, Smith finished the film before courts had decided the fates of Springer and many other defendants.

Hulu’s *WeWork: Or the Making and Breaking of a \$47 Billion Unicorn*, is less satisfying. It checks a lot of docu-mania boxes. We get scammer-ish subjects who ooze hubris in *WeWork* founder Adam Neumann and his woo-woo wife Rebekah; a chance to gawk at the absurdity of corporate culture; and an opportunity for the viewer to feel smarter than billionaires. But director Jed Rothstein’s lack of direct access to the Neumanns makes *WeWork* feel like a rehash of existing reports.

On balance, the streaming-doc renaissance still seems like a good thing. If reality shows in documentary drag are getting the green light, so are urgent, ambitious non-fiction projects—like Netflix’s *Immigration Nation*, which travels to our borders and beyond to capture the immigration crisis from multiple angles. The *WeWorks* are worth enduring if their popularity encourages more funding for *City So Real* and *America to Me* director Steve James; Heidi Ewing and Rachel Grady (*One of Us, Love Fraud*); and *I Am Not Your Negro* filmmaker Raoul Peck, whose docuseries *Exterminate All the Brutes* comes to HBO on April 7.

It was inevitable that the doc boom would result in some subpar work. But when we look back on how we endured the pandemic year, we may end up feeling grateful for the juice that was squeezed from low-hanging fruit. It may not have been the most nourishing, but at least it added flavor to our days. □

FICTION

The truth behind a fantasy Harlem

By Cady Lang

MORGAN JERKINS DELIGHTS IN FINDING the fantastical within the familiar. In her new novel, *Caul Baby*, everyday life takes on a surreal glow: a bodega covertly peddles mystical talismans; a brownstone visibly embodies its owners' secrets. And on that border between our world and her imagination, fantasy reveals a sometimes harsh truth about reality.

No element of *Caul Baby* better illustrates Jerkins' ability to spin magic out of the mundane than the titular caul, the amniotic membrane that surrounds a baby in the womb. In the novel, members of the miraculous Melancon family—three generations of Black women living in Harlem—carry this thin, translucent layer of skin with them throughout their lives. Their cauls provide them with physical invincibility—and, later, income, when they begin selling pieces for profit. The caul's supposed ability to provide good luck and a defense from evil has a long history in folklore, but Jerkins says the complex, passionate women who produce it in the book are deeply rooted in reality. “I kept thinking about how Black women are supposed to be everything for everyone else,” she says. “Is it too far-fetched to think of Black women healing or protecting, providing to others, when we know they have a legacy of that?”

Caul Baby begins with a Harlem community thrown into flux by a motherhood melodrama. Laila, a local woman who's suffered several miscarriages, goes to the Melancons to buy a piece of caul in an effort to protect her latest pregnancy. They refuse her request, preferring instead to sell their precious skin to white customers with deep pockets, a practice that builds ire against the family in the rapidly gentrifying neighborhood. When Laila pub-

‘I wanted to have some type of document to memorialize [Harlem] the way that I remember it.’

MORGAN JERKINS, on setting her novel in her neighborhood

licly descends into madness after her child is stillborn, the Melancons acquire a baby of their own under hazy circumstances, adding to the ill will. And the child, Hallow, carries a caul.

As the inheritor of that gift, Hallow is hailed by her family as the great hope for their future, but she struggles with the way the caul limits her life—the overt disdain from their community; the loneliness of her existence; the responsibility to provide for her family, as did the women before her, when her body is the commodity. Hallow is physically protected from harm, but at a high price. “Just because someone heals doesn't mean that they don't feel pain,” Hallow's

mother Josephine says by way of explanation, not consolation. “We all carry something.”

JERKINS BEGAN WRITING *Caul Baby* in 2015, shortly after moving to Harlem from New Jersey. That she worked on the novel almost the entirety of her time there is evident in the writing. Landmarks like Amy Ruth's restaurant and St. Philip's Church are name-checked, and the vibrancy of the city crowds every page.

“When I moved to New York, my senses ran amok,” she says. “One of the things that fascinate me about Harlem, aside from these rich diasporic communities, is the cacophony, that if you really lean into the sound here, you hear so many different kinds of cadences, different types of rhythms, different types of pulses.”



Jerkins originally wrote *Caul Baby* as a short story for her MFA writing program but was encouraged by her adviser to expand it into a novel

That feeling made her committed to thinking of the neighborhood as not just a setting but a character. What she saw living there added urgency to that mission. “I knew I wanted to give ode to Harlem in some type of work, but I thought that it had to be this one, because of how rapidly [Harlem] was changing,” she says. “I wanted to have some type of document to memorialize the way that I remember it.”

In early 2020, it seemed for a while that such memorialization would be necessary even sooner than Jerkins had thought. The pulse of New York City seemed to ebb, as the COVID-19 pandemic put a damper on the hard-hit city. Many New Yorkers felt their own versions of the desperation that drives the fictional Melancons.

By the time a new kind of noise returned last summer, with racial-justice protests filling the streets, Jerkins was putting the finishing touches on her manuscript and was reminded once again of the very real feelings she brought to bear on the world she crafted. “What does survival look like for those who are a part of disenfranchised communities?” she asks. “What does it look like for those who are conditioned, [like] Black women, to be the pillars and the lighthouses, figuratively speaking, for everyone else, often at the expense of their selves, their self-autonomy, their individuality?”

Caul Baby is Jerkins’ first novel, though she published two nonfiction books while writing it, 2018’s essay collection *This Will Be My Undoing* and 2020’s family-memoir-slash-history *Wandering in Strange Lands: A Daughter of the Great Migration Reclaims Her Roots*. She also worked full-time as an editor and teacher. Since the pandemic began, however, Jerkins has been trying to give self-care as much consideration as carving out time for her writing.

Yet in that homebound moment, she also found that the broad horizon offered by fiction—whether rooted in the bizarre or the banal, or both—was more crucial than ever. “I think it’s helpful to work on fiction in the pandemic, because I want to escape,” she says. “I want my mind to run free as it can—and a lot of times that stretches right into the fantastic, right into the surreal.” □

More of April’s best books

By Annabel Gutterman

My Broken Language

In her memoir, Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright **Quiara Alegría Hudes** details her coming-of-age in Philadelphia surrounded by her Puerto Rican family. In lyrical terms, she describes the stories that filled her life, told in both English and Spanish, and examines her relationship with language. In the process, she considers how these stories have informed her artistry and sense of home. The result is a moving self-portrait of an author reckoning with the worlds she straddled and the communities she found along the way.

What Comes After

JoAnne Tompkins’ gripping debut novel begins with the most unwelcome of endings: the apparent murder-suicide of best friends Jonah and Daniel. The teenage boys leave behind a devastated Quaker community in Washington State where Isaac, Daniel’s father, finds himself with an unlikely houseguest, a pregnant 16-year-old girl. Tompkins flips between perspectives, including Jonah’s harrowing thoughts before his death, to reveal the heartbreaking intersections of these characters’ lives. *What Comes After* is equal parts a thrilling mystery and an aching examination of grief and guilt.

Crying in H Mart

Expanding on her viral 2018 essay of the same name, **Michelle Zauner** takes a stirring look at her relationship with her mother, food and identity in her new memoir. Zauner, the indie pop star who performs under the moniker Japanese Breakfast, describes her difficult adolescence as one of the only Asian-American kids at her school in Oregon. When Zauner is 25, her mother is diagnosed with terminal cancer—forcing the singer to grapple with her Korean-American identity and her mother’s presence in her life. As she does, she captures, in piercing terms, the powerful connections between food and family.

White Magic

Ten interconnected essays make up **Elissa Washuta’s** bruising new nonfiction collection. In them, the author, who is a member of the Cowlitz Indian Tribe, unveils her efforts at healing after years of struggling with sobriety, PTSD and a misdiagnosis of bipolar disorder. She asks haunting questions about intoxication, love, grief and more, all while interspersing references to the pop culture that’s informed her life, from *Twin Peaks* to Stevie Nicks. These are seemingly disparate threads, but Washuta ties them all back to her quest to understand the impact of all that she’s endured.

I’m Waiting for You: And Other Stories

The two sets of paired stories in **Kim Bo-Young’s** newly translated work of speculative fiction confront life’s biggest questions: How long can love endure? Who decides what makes a person good or bad? And is there really such a thing as free will? These are heavy topics, but Kim tackles them with playful prose and a creative eye. Her narratives, which are set in the future, drive us to reconsider our present and all that we take for granted.

Good Company

While preparing for her daughter Ruby’s upcoming high school graduation, Flora Mancini discovers an envelope with her husband’s wedding ring inside, a curious find because he claimed to have lost the ring in a pond during a summer trip many years ago. The ring’s reappearance has unforeseen consequences—ones that ripple throughout *The Nest* author **Cynthia D’Aprix Sweeney’s** second novel. In navigating the many fissures in her relationships with her husband as well as her best friend, Flora must simultaneously come to terms with all that she didn’t know about her marriage, friendships and family.



REVIEW

Idris Elba brings a regal urban cowboy to life

By Stephanie Zacharek

BEING A WONDERFUL ACTOR MAY BE MORE OF A BLESSING than being a great actor, and Idris Elba is a wonderful actor. In *Concrete Cowboy*, Elba plays a resident of North Philadelphia who's a dedicated horseman, part of a community of riders and horse lovers who have long made use of a stretch of tumbledown stables that, in an increasingly gentrifying world, now lie right in the crosshairs of developers. Elba's character, a laconic gent named Harp, shares his untidy house with a horse, cordoned off in a makeshift living-room stall.

Why is there a horse in Harp's living space? Who cares? The presence of this horse, a creamy, speckled beast named Chuck, clues us in to certain qualities of Harp's character that Elba unfurls for us later: this is a man of hard-nosed practicality who gives not a mane's flick for the rules dictating how things should be done, particularly as they've been laid down by white people. He's also a man who knows that beauty needs care and tending. No wonder Elba's Harp, elegant even in a rumpled cotton shirt and tattered straw cowboy hat, feels at home with a regal equine houseguest.

Depending on how you define greatness, Elba may in fact be a great actor. But great actors—hamstrung by their obsessive attention to technique or their personal dignity, or both—are sometimes boring. And Elba is never boring.

Born in Britain but adept at pulling off regional American accents, Elba first caught the attention of TV audiences as the charismatic drug kingpin Russell "Stringer" Bell in *The Wire*. More recently, he's starred as an emotionally tortured homicide detective on the British TV series *Luther*. In the movies, Elba has mostly learned to do a lot with a little, bringing unstudied glamour to roles like the reptilian villain Krall in *Star Trek Beyond* and the all-seeing Norse deity Heimdall

in several Marvel movies. He even emerged with his dignity intact from the fascinating atrocity known as *Cats*. A man who can survive that unsettling CGI fur can be trusted with anything.

BUT THE ROLE of Harp in *Concrete Cowboy* is muscular enough to be worthy of Elba. Harp is the father of Cole (Caleb McLaughlin), a Detroit teenager who's headed for trouble. His exasperated mother drops him off in Philly to spend the summer with his estranged father, an arrangement that pleases no one. Cole flirts with selling drugs, but as it turns out, he has a way with horses, most notably a surly creature known as Boo. Before Cole can ride, though, he must follow his father's orders: that means slinging poop out of stalls.

Concrete Cowboy—directed by Ricky Staub and adapted from a novel by Greg Neri, inspired by Philadelphia's real-life Fletcher Street Urban Riding Club—is your classic story about an irritable young man redeemed by an animal, and the embrace of a community. But it's satisfying even so, largely because watching Elba is such a pleasure. The language Harp uses to describe his own youthful frustration could figure in any number of stories, but Elba opens it up anew. He tells Cole that as an absentee father stuck in jail, he begged Cole's mother for the privilege of naming his son, choosing tenor saxophonist supreme and fellow Philadelphian John

Astride a horse, Elba radiates a citified elegance, like the stranger who rides into town and instantly captivates every local



*Standing up to the law:
Method Man and Elba
in Concrete Cowboy*

Coltrane as his inspiration: “He was the greatest man I ever knew who did it without a father.”

Elba turns the line itself into music: his voice, smoky and resonant, finds hidden notes we couldn’t have previously imagined, bent phrases wrought from scar tissue and resilience. And astride a horse, Elba radiates a citified elegance, like the stranger who rides into town and instantly captivates every local. His face, soulful and mischievous, reserves some of its secrets: Elba plays Harp as a man whose past we’re invited to imagine, one who finds solace in stroking the nose of a horse.

Elba is always magisterial, and for years now, his fans have been floating his name as a candidate for the next James Bond. Just imagining him in the role invites rapture: Elba was born for the luxe chill of a martini glass and the satin sheen of a tuxedo lapel. So let’s think, for a minute, about what this casting choice would mean. Calls for representation in casting, as well-intentioned as they are, may have also flattened the way we think about acting, forcing many to frame people as great Black actors, or great Asian actors, and so on, rather than focusing on what any individual brings to the craft. Our frustration finds its outlet in questions: Why didn’t a Black actor get this role? or Why couldn’t they have cast an Asian actor? We clamor to change the types of pegs allotted to a limited number of holes.

These protestations make us feel better, and maybe, in time, will spur change. But our most wonderful actors need to be seen as more than place markers for a quota we’re yearning to fill. What is it about a face that holds us? What faces make our world feel bigger? Elba has one of those faces, and a universe where he’d get to play 007 would be a richer one. He’s a 21st century movie star, waiting for his century to catch up with him.

CONCRETE COWBOY streams on Netflix beginning April 2

SAM NIXON

The real concrete cowboys

THE FIRST AMERICAN COWBOYS

Hollywood westerns helped popularize the image of the cowboy as a gallant white man on horseback. But the term was first used to refer to enslaved Black men who tended to cattle and maintained the land of white ranchers who had left to fight in the Civil War. After the war, as the formerly enslaved sought out livelihoods, many headed west to help herd cattle and work as ranch hands. Historians estimate that 1 in 4 cowboys was Black.

THE BLACK RIDERS OF PHILADELPHIA

Various origin stories exist, but locals say the community dates to the early 20th century, when Black livestock owners in the South began migrating north for industrial jobs. Though there are few historical records, by the 1980s there were at least 10 Black-owned riding stables and as many as 250 Black cowboys in the greater Philadelphia area.

DISPLACEMENT AND GENTRIFICATION

Black riders have been repurposing abandoned warehouses, empty lots and row-house shells to stable their horses for decades in Philadelphia. But as gentrification increased in the 1980s, the city began seizing the property, leaving riders with few places to house their animals.

THE RICH HISTORY OF FLETCHER STREET

The Black-owned riding stables on Fletcher Street, in North Philadelphia, became a cornerstone of the community, hosting horse races,

providing a safe place for local youth and forming a nonprofit in 2004. “It’s not just about camaraderie, but they invested into their community,” says Isa Shahid, who grew up riding horses in Philadelphia. “That’s the legacy we want to continue: transferring morals and principles into young men and women.” Fletcher Street riders poured their earnings into the stables to keep them operating as urban redevelopment threatened their existence.

FACING DOWN EXISTENTIAL THREATS

City and animal-welfare officials raided the Fletcher Street stable in 2008, ordering the immediate removal of all the horses. The city demolished the makeshift stables, nearly undoing the Fletcher Street Urban Riding Club. In 2019, the riding club moved onto land it owned on Fletcher Street—but city plans to build affordable housing have put the club in limbo once again.

THE FACES OF CONCRETE COWBOY

The movie intertwines anecdotes from the real-life Fletcher Street riders. Cole, the protagonist of the film and the book on which it’s based, Greg Neri’s *Ghetto Cowboy*, is a “pastiche” of several young men Neri met. Riders involved in the film advised actors on set and were encouraged to improvise. “I tried as much as possible to infuse it with an authentic narrative that would feel specific to the community,” says director and writer Ricky Staub.

—Paulina Cachero



Jamil Prattis, who has maintained horses for 15 years, on Fletcher Street in 2017

REVIEW

Taylor Swift rewrites history

By Raisa Bruner

IF YOU PAY CLOSE ATTENTION, YOU CAN HEAR IT: there's a new lushness in the opening banjo twangs, and an extra beat when she sings the lyric "Just say yes." But the difference between the 2008 version of Taylor Swift's "Love Story," which helped propel Swift to pop stardom, and the 2021 rerelease of that same song is pretty subtle. Called "Taylor's Version" on streaming platforms, the new mix will soon be followed by rerecordings of Swift's back catalog, beginning with the rest of her album *Fearless*, which arrives April 9.

In all these rerecordings, the lyrics and production haven't changed that much: it's Swift's business that's shifted. Now 31, Swift has gone full indie pop—as shown by her Grammy-winning turn on her recent album *Folklore*. But beneath those dreamy soundscapes is an artist who's been fighting for years now to manage the means, method of production, and distribution of her work.

Swift signed to Big Machine Records in 2005, a fresh-faced Nashville singer with a guitar and long blond hair. The contract expired in 2018 but not before she rocketed to radio-play heights with hits like "I Knew You Were Trouble" and crossed into the pop stratosphere with sold-out stadium tours over the course of six albums. When her deal was up, she switched labels to Universal's Republic Records. Big Machine owns the masters, or original recordings, of her first six albums, as is typical with many recording deals. In her new contract, Swift made sure to secure ownership of her future masters. Changing labels, carving out more agency, updating contract terms—these steps are par for the course for a successful artist. People change, and so do the contracts that govern them.

BUT SWIFT'S BEHIND-THE-SCENES MOVES became front-page news when Big Machine sold to private-equity group Ithaca Holdings, an entity owned by powerhouse music manager Scooter Braun. He then sold her masters to another company, Shamrock Holdings, for a reported \$300 million in 2019. On a business level, Braun's move was smart: Swift's master recordings reap profits whenever the songs are streamed or bought. On the personal front, it was contentious: Swift claims Braun, who manages stars like Kanye West and Justin Bieber, has repeatedly bullied her, and so she slammed the sale publicly and promised to rerecord those original six albums, this time with the masters under her own control. Anyone who



Swift's rerecording of *Fearless*, originally released in 2008 with her old label, will be out on April 9

hits play on an old version of Swift's early songs right now will still pay into the bank of Braun. But her hope, it seems, is to override those archival works with these new versions. "Artists should own their own work for so many reasons," she wrote in a March 2021 Instagram post. "But the most screamingly obvious one is that the artist is the only one who really knows that body of work."

Every musician is a business, a startup with limited equity to portion out to labels, publishers and other stakeholders. Greater equity was the central consideration of Swift's label change—along with greater certainty that all who contributed to making the art itself would benefit from their work. "There was one condition that meant more to me than any other deal point," she wrote at the time: ensuring that profits from the future sale of Spotify shares would be returned to artists.

That this financial nitty-gritty is what excited Swift most might seem at odds with her image as a singer-songwriter who performs on sets that look like a cottage in a fairy-tale forest. But that persona hides Swift's savvy: she's long understood that artists, even those with brands as powerful as hers, are vulnerable to exploitation. After building an empire writing deeply personal songs, should selling her story really come so cheap?



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8 Questions

Kevin Young The new director of the National Museum of African American History and Culture on loss, Reconstruction and the power of poetry

You lived in Topeka, Kans., for a time growing up. What's it like to go from a central place in African-American history to running a history museum? I went to the church where Linda Brown of *Brown v. Board of Education* played piano and sang beautifully, so I was really aware of history all around. One of the things I moved to D.C. is a pew from that church. Having one reminds me of that upright feeling that that space provided, and history does that. The museum does the same thing. It puts a bone in the back and helps you think about this rich history of struggle and song.

What parts of the museum move you the most? The first known photo of Harriet Tubman, you get to stare into her eyes and see her staring back at you fiercely. Before this job, my son and I waited in line to see Emmett Till's glass-topped casket, and it occurred to me that we were re-enacting in some small way the experience that people had when they stood in line in Chicago to see Till's body after his mother Mamie Till insisted it be shown after he was lynched in Mississippi in 1955. Having a young son and walking through that space was haunting.

What are new plans you're working on at the museum? We're launching a new project, I hope, by the fall, which is the searchable museum, starting with the "Slavery and Freedom" exhibition. And it is taking some of those shows and exhibits that you can see in person and bringing them online, but in their own way. We're also debuting an exhibition on Reconstruction in the fall.

Why do an exhibit on Reconstruction now? Reconstruction thinks about questions of power, who can vote, representation, and those questions are still with us.

“THE POWER
OF WORDS
HASN'T GONE
AWAY”



Your anthology *African American Poetry: 250 Years of Struggle & Song* came out just in time for Amanda Gorman's Inauguration performance. Does she remind you of other poets in history? There is a tradition of Black Inaugural poets, whether it's Maya Angelou or Elizabeth Alexander. Gorman is following many footsteps, but she's also establishing her own. The power of words hasn't gone away.

What's distinct about Black American poetry? I finished the book last summer on Juneteenth in the midst of the protests of the murder of George Floyd and others, and I was struck by the way that the poets were already thinking about questions of violence and questions of resistance, but also questions of silence and speech. How do you sing in a time like this?—the “time like this” being throughout time.

Have you found the pandemic a good time to be creative? I've had close family members with COVID. It's a time when just surviving is enough. But people are doing more than just surviving, and in terms of the African-American tradition, that isn't unfamiliar. In struggle, we sing. I've returned to cooking, eating that food that sustained us for generations. A good pot of collard greens won't cure everything, but it will cure a lot. Poetry does some of the same things.

Do you have advice for what to say to people who have lost someone? What a poem can do that's slightly different than what you might say is [that] a poem can talk about the overwhelming sensation of grief in a detail. It can mention nature and not mention grief, but be filled with that feeling. Finding that metaphor is really powerful and personal. I also think you don't have to have the perfect words.

—OLIVIA B. WAXMAN

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